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Mother Lily: Only one film per producer during filmfest

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Sandigan orders arrest of Marcos crony Disini

By Armando N. Nocum

THE SANDIGANBAYAN yesterday ordered the arrest of businessman Herminio T. Disini, a close business associate and golfing buddy of the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos, who allegedly received $10 million or before four US firms that won the contract to build the multibillion

(SEE PAGE A2)

GMA won't cut or extend term

NOSE treatment: Princess Zion and Princess Mia Mecca of Pandasan City, Cebu, were surprised at the abdomen, pelvis and lower organs (above) if Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz paid for their 20-hour operation at the King Abdul Aziz Medical City in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

PRESIDENTIAL playmate: President Arroyo receives the twin princesses with their parents Carina and Jeanarlo Manzo at the Palace. Ms Arroyo presents a scholarship for the twins' education from kindergarten to college at the AMA University.

SAUDI Ambassador to the Philippines Mohammed Ameen Wali leads the group underneath the 8-month-old twins at the Main Egyptian lounge on Wednesday.

Royal welcome for split twins

By Jovanie Aning

NEIL JOEL and penny in pink, the conjoined twins who were successfully separated in Saudi Arabia, returned home yesterday to hugs and cheers from family, diplomats, and even President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Nine-month-old twins Princess Ann and Princess Mia Mecca were formerly joined at the abdomen and pelvis and shared lower organs. They flew to Saudi Arabia in January and returned home yesterday finally separated after a complete surgery sponsored by the Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz al-Saud.

Accompanied by their mother Carina and aunt Jocelyn, the twins were given a welcome fit only for princesses. They were greeted by Saudi Ambassador to the Philippines Mohammed Ameen Wali, Philippine Ambassador to Riyadh Rahmatin Guiamalia, and Foreign Undersecretary

(SEE PAGE A2)

THE A-TEAM: Dr. Abdullah Rabeeah (center), CEO of the National Guard Health Affairs, headed the 46-man surgical team that separated the twins.

President not keen on being PM

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

NO STEPPING down in 2007 but no extension of her term beyond 2010, either.

Camilo Sabio, presidential adviser on constitutional reforms, said this was his "reading" of President Macapagal-Arroyo's position on the issue of whether her six-year term would be affected by a proposed shift to a parliamentary-federal system of government.

It was Valentino's to ask Ms Arroyo to step down without completing her term, Sabio said the lessons, referring to proposals for her to resign from 2007 to pave the way for the shift.

He also said that Ms Arroyo would not agree to an extension of her term beyond 2010 because it would be "politically harmful" to her.

Sabio's statement was the latest of a series of seemingly mixed signals that Malacañang has sent out in recent months on an issue that is further clouding an already fragmented country saddled with huge financial problems.

Regarding proposals for Ms Arroyo to give up three years of her term as part of the transition to a parliamentary system starting in 2007, Sabio said: "I think it would be highly unpalatable."

"I don't think the President would favor stepping down in 2007. They should not make her step down," he said.

Sabio's remarks echoed state-

(SEE PAGE A2)

'Evil forces' blocking way to Cabinet

By Armando N. Nocum

THE BISHOP who claimed to be next in line for the justice portfolio is crying political harassment.

Deputy Speaker Raul Gonzalez yesterday said the graft case filed against him and other respondents by the president of the Association of Barangay Captains (ABC) in Iloilo was "designed to influence" President Macapagal-Arroyo against appointing him justice secretary.

The Department of Justice is now headed by acting Secretary Raul Gonzalez.

ABC president Marietta Orbeta charged Gonzalez with graft in the Office of the Ombudsman on Tuesday for allegedly planning to remove her from office because she did not support the candidacy of Gonzalez's son and namesake, an incoming member of the 12th Congress. But Gonzalez, in chair of the joint congressional committee that announced the voter list for president and vice president, denied this.

(SEE PAGE A2)

Furor over Dinky case stumps Palace, 'Kabayan'

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and Rob Corcuera

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo has neither signed the appointment papers of Vice President Noli de Castro as new social welfare secretary nor indicated whether she would reconsider the replacement of the incumbent, Corazon "Dinky" Soliman.

"We don't have any guidance from the President on the particular matter, and we will await her signals," her spokesperson, Ignacio Bunye, said yesterday by way of commenting on the appeal of certain quarters for her to reconsider her decision.

"Kabayan" De Castro was reportedly still praying for guidance on whether he would accept the post. He issued a statement yesterday saying there was "no bad blood" between Soliman and himself.

Soliman announced on Tuesday her resignation from the UNP3 effective July 21, "to support the political commitment" to name De Castro to the post.

She said resigning was the "hardest most principled thing to do" after learning about De Castro's "strong preference" for the post.

But a day after making a tearful farewell, Soliman detailed months of her media interviews "putting into question" the remarks she made in pushing her post to De Castro.

She reiterated that she had turned no ill-feeling toward De Castro and the President, and said the latter's assessment of her resignation was a "painful but wise decision" made for the sake of "unity" within the Arroyo administration.

But in a hint of what would

(SEE PAGE A2)

US treasure hunter rapped for smuggling RP artifacts

By Philip C. Tubeza

AN AMERICAN treasure hunter and a suspended official of the National Museum face criminal charges for smuggling 47 more than a thousand cultural artifacts out of the country two years ago.

Charged before the Department of Justice yesterday for hauling out porcelain and pottery retrieved from 16th-century shipwrecks in Philippine waters were American Philip Green and Efren U. Flores, former officer-in-charge of the museum's cultural properties division.

Also named respondents in the case filed by SM Director Consuelo Alvarez were four employees of the landscape firm Freightliner Int'l Inc.—Arlene Sanchez, Augusto O. Villar, Mario Achilles B. Cabrelos, and Dominic S. Mendez—and several John and Jane Does.

Former Sen. Loren Legarda exposed Green's activities in June last year by selling for an inquiry into how a whole cache of archeological finds slipped past Philippine customs.

The New York Times earlier re-

(SEE PAGE A2)

'Okay-okay' at House

By Carlos Pabio

THE JOCKEYING for committee chairmanships is in full swing among ruling party members in the House of Representatives, prompting one legislator to appeal for some decency among his colleagues.

"Let's not make this into an auction, about as

(SEE PAGE A2)

Ombudsman hit for inaction on GMA plunder raps

By Armando N. Nocum

HOW congenial was?

That seems to be the question that former Justice Secretary Hernando Barrera is asking.

Barrera, a defeated senatorial candidate, yesterday urged Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo to speed up the resolution of three complaints for plunder, which he had filed against President Macapagal-Arroyo and several government officials. Cheney warned he might file criminal charges against Marcelo himself for dereliction of duty.

(SEE PAGE A2)

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
THURSDAY, JULY 8, 2004
Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

Palace eyes hike in fees, oil taxes

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

EVEN as Malacañang assures the public that it is exhausting all the means available to keep inflation in check, government economic managers have endorsed a proposal for an immediate increase in taxes on petroleum and government fees that all but ensures spiraling inflation in the coming months.

The inflation rate surged to a 31-month high of 5.1 percent in June because of soaring oil prices and a rise in the price of basic commodities.

"The government is doing all it can to hold the inflation rate down while working on a better climate for economic growth," presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said yesterday.

Bunye said the government was looking at a fuel price rollback by the end of the month—P1.40 per liter as proposed by Consumer and Oil Price Watch chair Raul T. Concepcion—which he said would help ease out the inflation rate.

Sometime, a plan to impose an additional petroleum tax of up to P2 per liter—as proposed by the Department of Finance and endorsed by the Economic Monitoring Group (EMG) on Monday—could wipe out the anticipated price rollback and could even push up oil prices.

The increase in the petroleum tax and in government user charges—as the fees collected by various government agencies—are two quick-fix revenue measures being proposed by the DOF to arrest a looming financial crisis.

The EMG, a group of government economic managers and legislators advising the President, has endorsed the plan as the combined measures would pump P45.7 billion—covering nearly a quarter of the projected P200 billion budget deficit this year—into the government's coffers.

Concepcion warned, however, that the poor and middle-class would bear the brunt of higher petroleum taxes and urged President Macapagal-Arroyo to delay the tax adjustment for a few months at least.

"While we agree that the government's fiscal situation demands additional sources of revenue, we believe that the public would be more willing to take their share of the pain as long as the President shows his/her sincerity in enforcing drastic austerity measures in her administration," Concepcion said in an interview.

Administration Rep. Jose Solis, a member of the EMG, said the Palace Inc-quorum was favored because of the ease of implementation.

All that would be needed is for the President to issue an executive order to adjust the petroleum tax and an administrative order to raise government fees and charges.

In documents obtained by the Inquirer, the DOF said the additional P1 tax on petroleum products would raise P38 billion in increased revenues.

An increase in government user charges would bring in another P7.7 billion.

The DOF justified the hike in oil taxes because it said the Philippines' oil tax rate is one of the lowest in the world. It said that taxes on oil products have been declining as a percentage of pump prices over the past 7 years because their base have not been adjusted for inflation and rising petroleum prices.

It argued that a tax on oil products was an excellent source of revenues because it was progressive—that is, the rate increases with an increase in taxable income—simple to administer and collect; is minimal tax collector discretion and leakages.

The DOF justified its plan to increase government "user charges," noting that most of these fees and charges were now just a fraction of the cost of administration because they have not been adjusted to the past 38 years.

Among the agencies likely to be affected are those covering building permits, health permits, motor plates and license fees, land survey data certification, well drilling, petroleum and mineral exploration fees, and medical examination fees.

Excluded from the planned increases are mandatory fees or subsidized services like education and health.

The DOF noted that the last presidential decree raising government fees and charges by 50 percent was issued in January 2001 but only a few agencies have complied.

10 cons to die by September

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE death row inmates are scheduled for execution in September the most, having Justice Secretary Ma. Merodina Gutierrez said yesterday.

Gutierrez also praised the decision of the Manila Regional Trial Court which on Monday sentenced to death a former Bureau of Corrections policeman and two others for kidnapping a college student in 2000.

That same day, the Supreme Court affirmed the death sentence on a rapist-killer who kidnapped a nine-year-old Chinese-Filipino student in Quezon City seven years ago.

"We have a death penalty law and we have to enforce it," Gutierrez said after the rulings came out.

She said that the 10 convicts scheduled to die in two months' time were convicted of rape or rape with homicide. They would be executed by lethal injection unless President Macapagal-Arroyo would grant them reprieves.

Among those scheduled to die were six inmates who were given stays of executions last month. Their executions would be executed in March but Ms Arroyo gave them 90-day reprieves. They were identified as Filemeno C. Serrano, Josel Rivera, Fidel T. Heredia, Emilio S. Bermido, Filipon L. Serrano and Salvador C. Mercado.

The President earlier imposed a moratorium on executions due to pressure from the influential Catholic Church. After much lobbying from the Chinese-Filipino community, she changed her mind and said kidnappers and drug dealers would be executed.

In January, convicts Roberto Lao and Frederick Lim Jr. were supposed to be executed but the SC issued stays of executions to allow the two to present further tape that would allegedly prove their innocence.

The Manila Regional Trial Court sentenced Lao and Limjap to death on Sept. 8, 1999 for kidnapping Chinese businessman Joseph Yuchengco and his assistant Julie Hernandez on Aug. 15, 1998. The Supreme Court affirmed their death sentence on Sept. 15, 2003.

The other six sentenced in the case were Pedro Maltasing, Alex Placido, Jojo Aquino, Allan Placido, Jojo Aquino, Allan Placido, Angelo "Boy" Delos Reyes, Dodong Adolfo and Dodong "Boy" Adolfo.

Maltasing and Delos Reyes were arrested in January and claimed that Lim was innocent. The Maltasing court is trying them along with the two other convicts.

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US stance on peace in South irks Palace

By Gil C. Cabacungan

MALACAÑANG has been angered by United States criticism of its anti-terrorism campaign, saying Washington's financial and technical aid to the Philippines did not give it the right to dictate policy.

The Palace reaction did not hide its disappointment over the US Congress' decision to withdraw an offer of $60 million in development aid to remedial areas in Mindanao in which Arroyo expressed.

US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone said Tuesday that Washington was concerned about the delay in the peace negotiations with the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the supposed presence of terrorist camps in Mindanao allegedly being run by the Jemaah Islamiyah, the Southeast Asian regional terror group.

Ricciardone said the delay had caused the diversion of the $30 million in other US-funded development projects in Mindanao.

The US ambassador said that terrorists trained in Mindanao by Osama bin Laden and other Al-Qaeda terrorists were a threat not only to the Philippines but to Southeast Asia and the rest of the world.

The Palace took strong exception to Ricciardone's remarks, claiming that President Macapagal-Arroyo has been relentless in her efforts to fight terrorism.

"We've been engaged in fighting terrorism since day one," said Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio Bunye in a statement.

"We acknowledge the support of the US in these efforts. We acknowledge the concern of the US government but we do not have to be told/coerced/say-thrice," he said.

He noted that the "offensive assaults" has been on the ground since 2000 and that the government was involved in "a continuing drive to weed out terrorist cells from isolated communities in Mindanao."

Bunye also regretted the withdrawal of the $30-million, an offer he characterized as "just over that made in September, which he said Malacañang had been dangling before the Muslim rebels as one of the benefits to be gained from signing a peace treaty.

"We would have been grateful if the funds had not been withdrawn," Bunye said, but noted that the US continues to be engaged in the peace process through several other grants and other forms of assistance.

He also said that despite the row, the Philippines' strategic partnership with the world's most powerful nation was "so strong as ever."

MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu said the group will not be rushed into signing a peace treaty "just because of the $30 million."

"We are not cheap. In the first place, we did not ask for the money," Kabalu said in reaction to Ricciardone's statement. With a report from Jess-Alyn V. de Guzman, Phil Blas-dann Baron

RP needs 25,000 new priests

THE PHILIPPINES has a shortage of 25,000 priests, a bishop said yesterday.

Not outsiders as well as materialism have contributed to the decline in the ranks, with the youth seen as not interested in entering the priesthood, said Bishop Luis Antonio Tagle.

"We are seeing a decline," Tagle told a news conference on the sidelines of a "synod renewal seminar" for some 4,000 priests in Manila.

"The environment creates circumstances that makes a person less receptive to the kind of life," Tagle lamented.

The current ratio of one priest per 15,000 parishioners is "far from ideal," he said, adding that the country needs 25,000 more priests if it was to serve the people better.

However, he said he Philippines was better off than in the United States and Europe, where dozens of churches have closed in recent months due to a spate of scandals or lack of parishioners. AFP

DFA revives 'Sabah Desk'

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo has reactivated a so-called "Sabah Desk" that had been in the department since the 1960s to help the country formally file advice her on the Philippines' historic claim to the territory that is now in the possession of Malaysia, a foreign affairs official said yesterday.

Undersecretary for Special Concerns Rafael Seguis said reports that the department had revived an office to watch the status of the claim should not be a source of controversy.

The Sabah claim is to be one of the topics in the meeting here next week of the Philippine-Malaysian joint committee on bilateral cooperation. The agenda includes the issue of arresting up to members in Sabah and the ransom(?0) paid to free them.

Seguis said the updating and collating of files pertaining to the claim was "procedural" and part of the department's task, as a member of the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council, to monitor the claim and help formulate policy.

The Philippines bases its claim on the territory on the fact that the Sultan of Sulu merely leased Sabah to the British East India Co. in 1878. Sabah, formerly known as North Borneo, became part of colonial British Malaya and then of independent Malaysia in 1963.

The Sultan of Sulu, who insists that his proprietary rights and to receive the annual rent, still has heirs living in Sabah, one of whom, Jamalul Kiram III, is a member of the Philippine House of Representatives. Jerome Aning

We will be responsible, says new Senate minority

By Christine O. Avendaño

"WE WILL be responsible opposition."

So declared the new Senate minority as it vowed to scrutinize the programs of President Macapagal-Arroyo and support only those that would benefit the people and the country.

Among the government initiatives that the minority intends to support include the debate of Iraq's military power with continued strife and Muslim extremism and to collect taxes from existing tax laws, not new ones, Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said.

In their first meeting since the last elections, the minority senators, however, failed to come up with a common stand on two burning issues—the Senate presidency and constitutional amendments. Pimentel said they would try to come up with a common position on the two issues.

"We are presenting ourselves as responsible members of the opposition in that we will continue to fight what is good for the people and in effect support initiatives of the government that in our mind will enhance the benefit of the people and the country," he said.

At a news conference at the Manila Hotel, Pimentel said the minority would also scrutinize "line by line" the 10-point program of President Arroyo.

Pimentel also disclosed that Sen. Ramon Revilla Jr. was part of the nine-man minority as he acknowledged efforts of the group to patch up the rift between Lacson and Sen. Edgardo Angara.

"Definitely, but we will not tell you how. In other words you will know about it when it's done," Pimentel told reporters.

Lacson and Angara have been at odds with each other after Lacson ran for president on his own while Angara supported the presidential bid of Arroyo's standard-bearer Fernando Poe Jr.

Joining Pimentel in yesterday's meeting were Senators Sergio Osmeña III, Juan Ponce Enrile, Alfredo Lim, Jinggoy Estrada and Jamby Madrigal.

Miguel Zubiri and Sen. Loi Ejercito Estrada were absent. Angara was said to be in Quezon and Estrada in Pangasinan.

Lacson was a no-show. Pimentel said he was invited to the meeting through Enrile.

But Lacson, in a phone interview, denied he got an invitation. He said he had yet to make a decision on whom he would align himself. He said that since he left the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino, he has become an independent senator.

Two defeated presidential candidates, however, said Zubiri talk to him but only to ask him to become the Senate minority leader. He said he did not respond to the offer and in fact, was not interested in it.

"I'm not voting for it. I'm not fighting for it," Lacson said. His position is said to be for the taking of Pimentel.

Pinay, hubby held for cannabis garden

HONG KONG—An Australian man and his Filipino wife were arrested in Hong Kong for growing cannabis in a rooftop greenhouse, police said Wednesday.

Officers raided the couple's house Tuesday and found 24 marijuana plants that had grown to five to 13 meters, Inspector Peter Lo Kwok-kwan told Hong said. The police also seized cannabis leaves and seeds but said they could provide no immediate monetary value for the drugs.

The Apple Daily newspaper described the suburban greenhouse as sophisticated, complete with computerized sprinklers and a ventilation system. The newspaper said the cannabis was apparently being grown for personal consumption.

Hong identified the man by the surnames Sasse and the wife by the surname Cruz. The 39-year-old man and 30-year-old woman remained in custody Wednesday but had not been charged, Hong said.

Hong said more full names and bottom news weren't available. AP

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GMA won't cut or extend term

Continued from A1

nouncing Mr. Arroyo and other senior Palace officials on July 1 that she wanted to see the performance of the proposed consortium of government set up after her term ended in 2010, at the latest.

GMA wants full 6 years

The July 1 statement was a departure from a commitment that Mrs. Arroyo had made during the election campaign that she would agree to stepping down in 2007 to pave the way for the shift.

On Tuesday, Mr. Arroyo reiterated against putting the issue of Charter change at the back burner for the long, trying "if could have cut and be last forever."

But Mr. Arroyo insisted that the people would approve setting Mr. Arroyo's term even if this would be the decision of a constituent assembly or a constitutional convention.

"I believe the people want to give her a chance," Subio said.

He said Mr. Arroyo wanted to serve the full six years of her term so she could implement her programs, which were "urgently needed" by the people.

But he said Mr. Arroyo was also pursuing Charter change now because sensing the Constitution would be a long-term process.

No conflict with agenda

"My reading of the President's position is that it is important for her to pursue her 10-point social and economic agenda," Subio said in a phone interview. "She proposed change should not prejudice her implementation of this program."

Subio said Mr. Arroyo might not agree to become concurrent prime minister starting in 2007, as proposed by Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr.

"That is like the provision in the 1973 Constitution and the one was installed in [Ferdinand] Marcos," said Subio, a delegate to the 1971 Constitutional Convention, which framed the 1973 Constitution that allowed Marcos to prolong his rule indefinitely.

Under the 1973 Constitution, Marcos was both the President and Prime Minister, Subio recalled.

Neither would Mr. Arroyo accept proposals to extend her term beyond 2010, Subio said.

Subio's warning

"It would be politically harmful to her. The people would lose their faith in her," he said.

But Subio said it would be premature to debate these issues even because Congress has yet to decide the mode of changing the Charter.

"All these are speculations, so let's watch the developments in Congress," Subio said.

Malacañang said a Charter change could go hand in hand with Mr. Arroyo's 10-point pro-poor agenda spelled out in her inaugural address.

"Constitutional reform would be a medium-term framework for social and economic agenda the President wants to bring about under her new term," presidential spokesperson Jesus Bunye said yesterday.

He said Congress would determine the "time frame and the urgency of any move to amend the Charter."

"This will not conflict with the equally important efforts to battle the local [crime]," he said.

Subio earlier said that Mr. Arroyo was amenable to holding the election of constitutional convention delegates simultaneously with the barangay polls in May next year to minimize cost.

Subio said the process of amending the Charter should not be started because there was no telling how long it would take to complete the process.

'Kill Bill'

In the House, Rep. Crispin Beltran (Anakpawis) sounded the battle cry of "Kill Bill!—Kill all bills on Charter."

Beltran, a former labor leader, said that Anakpawis and its sister party-list groups were not against Charter change per se but they were sure that amending the 1987 Constitution right now was "deliberate to the society's economic and political welfare."

Beltran said he title of Quezon Executive's "Kill Bill" seems serious should cause to his mind when he thought of concerted moves to change the Constitution.

"This is what should be done to all bills calling for the amendment of the Constitution. Kill them all," Beltran said in a statement.

The organization that amending the Charter would remove the remaining protectionist provisions on the economy that had shielded local businessmen from the onslaught of foreign business monopolies.

There are four proposed concurrent resolutions in the House calling on the two chambers of Congress to convene them into a constituent assembly to amend the Constitution.

Rep. Rafael Mariano (Anakpawis) said that the administration was pushing "anti-people provisions" in a revised Charter.

Mariano, in an interview in the House, said these proposed provisions included a 100-percent foreign ownership of land and media, and curtailment of civil rights.

Economy first

Administration Rep. Mauricio Pantaleon (Lakas-Kampi-CMD) said that Congress had no plan of railroading passage of bills calling for Charter change.

"The public has to be given time to be consulted about it during consultative hearings," Pantaleon said in statement.

Rep. Mercedes Cuenca (NPC, Davao City) said debates on Charter change should be held in the "most transparent and democratic way."

In Davao City, Gov. Pio Garcia said the issue of constitutional amendments should be set aside until Filipinos should work together to tackle the country's worsening economic crisis.

Garcia said the underwood Mindanao's desire for a shift to a parliamentary system has "we should not forget that our economy is getting worse day by day [and this] must be prioritized first."

Modelling

In Lanao City, the seven-in-lab. o-folk group Pambansang Lakas ng Bayang Maranaoan(Lakas ng Filipino) (Nationalists) urged US ambassador to the Philippines Francis J. Ricciardone to stop modelling in the country's democratic affairs.

The group was reacting to Ricciardone's statement on Tuesday calling on the Philippines to strengthen the rule of law to prevent chances of solving the decades-old problems of poverty and insurgency. With reports from Carlito Pablo, Anthony L. Ailoda and Jaymaclaire A. Lacsa, PDI Mindanao Bureau, and Bullit J. Mullet Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Mindanao businessmen: Let's change Charter first

THE CALL for Charter change has split the leaders of Congress, but several business executives in Mindanao yesterday came out in support of the proposal, saying a restructure of government would improve business conditions in the South.

Antonio Santos, chair of the Mindanao Business Council (MBC), said that, in the current situation, it was easier for a coalition to get through the ears of a months than for students to get from Cotabato to Davao.

"The [Congress] deficit has already been there for many years about it?" Santos asked, estimating a commentary by some legislators that the government should first solve the country's financial problems before worrying about the Constitution.

Dangers of delay

"The worry about high interest rates, other Mindanao has already caused liquidity of loans from [Land Bank of the Philippines] to [the Government] has only done the deficit bite," Santos said.

He said banks had refused to lend money in Mindanao, especially to what they consid-

ered "troubled areas."

"Unless you have a property in Davao that you can use as a collateral, you won't get any loan from banks," he said. Gaisano, who operates the Gaisano Mall in Cotabato City, situated at the heart of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

"That's why it is important that Mindanao keeps for new money (under the federal system) and only set aside a portion for the national government," he explained.

Move gaining support

Ramon Ang, MBC vice chair, said the move to change the Constitution to save the new has a bad condition of government had been gaining support from among Mindanao business leaders.

A federal form of government will reduce corruption because the powers of a centralized government will devolve to the local executive and legislative units.

"Support for the federal system for growth is strong that it might solve another revolution if we won't change to a federal form of government," he said.

Furor over Dinky case stumps Palace, 'Kabayan'

Continued from A1

have been the consequence had she not stepped down, Soliman said the Supreme Court believes we have absorbed her voices, I referred to resign—and the President as opposite."

She made the remark when asked whether she wanted early vote at stake at the time De Castro's vote highlighted DENR's problems.

In a radio interview, Soliman took time to explain her earlier statement that "it is time to move beyond" she said she assumed to the President on Monday, when she tendered her resignation.

Upon hearing that remark, the President told her that "what's happened is over by the time to a situation that had developed over time," and that was why she should not feel betrayed, Soliman said.

Asked why radio didn't announce on the requested plan of Mrs. Arroyo's resignation, Soliman said, to work for her retention at the DENR. Soliman replied on Friday, "I'm open to my powers or possibility and, I think, to it the Vice President become are both believe that public service should be continue upon."

Open mind

Asked whether Mr. Arroyo should be open to appeals, Pena said, "The President will definitely take into consideration the various recommendations."

He said that while the President had made up her mind, "I cannot say that she would reflect positive. he would go to De Castro, Soliman the heart of the on Tuesday

had been closed with Mr. Arroyo.

"The understanding is that the recommendation to her will be after up to Oct. 31, so on or before Oct. 31, the appointment papers for the 10 will be made," Bunye said.

He said Soliman had asked for time to finish four of her programs that were slated for completion.

Bunye declined to comment on criticisms of Mr. Arroyo's decision to appoint De Castro to place of Soliman at the DOST.

"The decision has been made," he said. "I think it's time for us to move ahead. let's try to attend to the needs of our country now and let's leave to time some behind."

Bunye said Cabinet officials stand respect Mr. Arroyo's prerogative to choose the members of her official family.

"We have to keep strengthening that all members of the Cabinet serve at the pleasure of the President," he said. "Everybody is a professional, and we will accept the decision of the President when she makes [it]."

In the transition period before Dr. Carlos's takeover, Soliman said she would be primarily concerned with securing Funds for Edsalo, the DENR's flagship program for poverty alleviation.

"This includes preparing the next tranche of the $300-million World Bank loan that the agency has been negotiating for years," Soliman said.

Soliman said the DENR had so far used about $1.2 million of the loan package.

She said the department would try to negotiate another $2 million from the World Bank, should it subsequently prove, before her resignation takes effect.

Dinky case worries Code-NGO members

By Vincent Cabreza
Philippine Daily Inquirer

ANGELES CITY—Members of Code-NGO, an umbrella organization of nongovernment organizations operating in the country, are anxious.

They fear that Gonzalo "Dinky" Soliman's resignation as social welfare secretary will mean that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is getting rid of Edsa 2 in the controversial "Hello Garci."

Soliman headed Code-NGO from 1998 until January 2004, when she quit to join Mr. Arroyo's Cabinet.

"We are concerned that if the [Soliman] issues to pursue a new image for her administration, the public that will no longer include the Poor Boods, which helped her administration despite the scandal they created," Bagtas-based NGO representation, told the Inquirer in a text message.

The Bagtas launched an inquiry into the legality of the Poor Boods, which earned P4.8 million in sponsorship commitments, Monday, 19 2004, from 10 companies.

Soliman defended the boods' purpose, which was "to provide support funds to grassroots people through Code-NGO."

But it was Jaime Bautista the Bagtas-based Bautista Foundation, and the Godfather Code-NGO Network (Code-NET), said Mr. Arroyo should also be grateful for the Poor Boods because they helped her financial issues a model for future nongovernment projects.

In his statement, De Castro said he would work for "a smooth transition" at the DENR.

He also said he would "fully effect" the DENR's projects and, and added that he was "fully confident on the ... competence and dedication of the career officials and rental members there."

But Guillermo Luz, chair of the Makati Business Club, said the President's pro-poor agenda got off on the wrong foot with the resignation of Soliman, whom he described as a "top performer."

He said that did not speak well of the President's commitment to her 10-point agenda.

Luz stated he was also not that Mr. Arroyo's appointments to the Cabinet would only be political accommodations.

"We believe some others got lost by the wayside because of political considerations," he said. Among them: Transportation and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza.

But in Manila, Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit said Soliman's time was part of the political mold.

'Evil forces' blocking way to Cabinet

Continued from A1

He said that the initiative had come from 119 of 120 village heads in Iloilo, and that the vote could be related to the strong likelihood that Mr. Arroyo would appoint him as the new justice secretary.

"This case is a classic example of political harassment," said Gonzalez, who played a major role in exposing the various of the votes through wiretapped conversations allegedly involving the participation of Mr. Arroyo as president and Sen. Mike de Castro as vice president.

"My mission on moving forward and swift against any possible appointment to the Cabinet for anyone accused by evidence," he said.

'Just a rumor'

Speculations over who would be named to the Cabinet continued to fly in many ways.

Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita dismissed talk that he was set to replace Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo.

"That's rumor, it's only a rumor." Ermita said, speaking of yesterday's statement quashing the SCBA on issuance of the Philippine Air Base.

"Secretary Romulo is competence and he is not going to be re-

placed," Ermita added. "If that happens, there will be two years after succession. That can't be."

Ermita also said he had not spoken with Mr. Arroyo regarding changes in the Cabinet or whether he was going to stay.

Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, the Armed Forces chief of staff who is scheduled to retire in October, also denied that he was preparing to replace Ermita at the Department of Defense.

In Malacañang, Mr. Arroyo's spokesperson Ignacio Bunye could not confirm reports that Romulo would be named concurrent foreign secretary.

"You know, there is speculation. If there is any decision from the President, we will just make the announcement," he told reporters.

Bunye had the same reply when asked if Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo would be replaced by Agriculture Undersecretary Cesar Bihon, a brother of Senate President Franklin Drilon.

The first changes in the Cabinet under the new Arroyo administration was the replacement of Interior Secretary Jose Lina by Retired Gen. Angelo Reyes.

Reyes tried the government officials belonging to the Rotary Club of Makati Central, of which the President's husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo, is a charter member.

Officials warned

The other officials he named were Health Secretary Jaime Galvez Tan and Retired Police Director Leandro Mendoza as chair and president of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. Director Ruben Wilfred Administrator Angelo Angeles, Philippine Ports Authority head Alfonso Cusi, MWSS Regulatory Board chair Jaime Bautista, Bases Conversion Development Authority head Edgardo Manalo and Agricultural Undersecretary Cesar Drilon.

"We express our continuing concern over the influence of the Office of Malacañang. Low officials has in the present administration," Reyes also said.

Arthur Villasanta and Brad Angangco were huge election contributors for GMA's campaign. They brought in a total of P16 million, based on reports of the Commission on Elections. What concerns us is that the still contributors be repaid by the administration through appointments and deals in the future," with reports from Alvin Ilagan, Artur Asbog-Abadilla and Tina Santos

CORRECTIONS

IN YESTERDAY'S issue, a front-page story mentioned the name of the new congressman from Ifugao. The correct name is Teodoro Benigno Jr., not Teodoro Jr.

IN YESTERDAY'S issue, a front-page story misspelled the name of a former secretary of social welfare and development. The correct spelling is Lina Laigo, not Laygo.

IN THE July 4 (Sunday) issue, on Page C2, Mia Rae Cayanan's birthday was, inadvertently, not accurately reflected in the article with Brandon as worldwide licensee for bags and accessories.

In the same story, all photos were credited to Maurice Arcadio. Both photos on Page C1 and three on Page C2—the bride's side, the hotel grounds and the newlyweds with the musicians—were taken by Eudora photographer Rita Pereira.

On Page C2, Isabel Penalver Reyes was inadvertently stimulated as Isabel Reyes Reyes in one of the photos.

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to cherry@inq.net, by phone (Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Amorsolo Street, Makati City; fax no. 897-4-5076 or, contact addresses/phone numbers at www.pdi.com.ph/publicaffairs@inquirer.com.ph).

Complaints about lack of fairness or objectivity may be sent to Raul Pangalangan, readers' advocate, c/o the same address and fax numbers, or those of the any editor, and e-mail will be published online at opinion.inq.net.

Royal, presidential welcome for split twins

THE FAMILY Cherina are pretty in pink.

From page A1

Lubis Rafael Ingan and Ani Wilhelmia.

Presented to media in the dignitaries' lounge of the Prince Sultan International Airport, the twins were given flowers, a cake and a large welcome banner by airline officials.

Philanthropist and former Ambassador Amable Aguiluz announced that he was providing scholarships to the twins which would guarantee their education from kindergarten to college.

Twins visit the Palace

Afterward, the twins along with their parents, were whisked to Malacañang to meet Ms Arroyo.

The twins' parents beamed and Cornea could not contain their happiness and expressed their overwhelming gratitude to Prince Abdullah, other Saudi officials and the medical team that operated on the twins.

"Their fairy tale grew up normally. Later, they will be able to walk like other children," said Cornea. She and her sister Jocelyn had traveled to Riyadh with the twins and stayed as guests of the Leysan Group.

The twins' elder sister Michelle and three-year-old brother Jonnard stayed behind. The whole family had a tearful but happy reunion at the Hajj.

"We want to go home soon as we can return to our normal lives. We will take care of the twins well and guide them as they grow up," said 38-year-old Jonnah, a stark brown woman.

Following the wishes of Prince Abdullah, the twins will be staying for 24 hours in a five-star hotel in Makati City before they fly to their hometown of Mandaue City, Cebu.

The infants' journey of healing started when their story, published in a local newspaper, caught the attention of Dr Abdullah Al Rabeeah, chief executive officer of the National Guard Health Affairs of the King Abdulaziz Medical City in Riyadh.

Through the newspaper, Al Rabeeah found the Manero family and offered, on behalf of the Riyadh hospital, to separate the twins. Follow-up examinations were overseen by the Saudi Embassy in Manila, through Charge d' Affaires Khalid bin Mfleh.

The Manero twins had major surgery to separate them on March 20. The operation lasted 14 hours and was aired live on the Internet. A thanksgiving and a laser-type were also performed on Princess Mae to correct a lung abnormality.

Seven days after the operation, the 50-man medical team headed by Dr. Abdullah al-Rabeeah announced that both babies were recovering well and had resumed breathing by mouth.

Prince Abdullah has sponsored successful operations for conjoined twins from Pakistan, Egypt and Sudan.

The prince, a brother of King Fahd bin Abdulaziz, also serves as Saudi deputy premier and commander of the National Guard.

Abdullah had paid $100,000 for the twins' surgery and even visited them during their recuperation. Aside and the surgery and the twins' stay in Saudi Arabia could easily cost $500,000.

Foreign Secretary Delia Albert, on behalf of the government, thanked Abdullah for sponsoring the operation.

"The successful operation underscores the continuing and deepening friendship between our nations. By giving the babies a chance for a better and brighter future, the Saudi government has not only performed a charitable act, but has also underscored the vibrant cooperation between the Philippines and Saudi Arabia," Albert said in a statement.

Conjoined hearts

On July 3, the Philippine Embassy in Riyadh honored Dr. Al-Rabeeah with a certificate of appreciation "for having done a special favor to the Manero family."

Esmeralda called the operation "a humanitarian gesture that has added another milestone in the friendly relationship" between Filipinos and Saudis.

The doctor, in response, said: Now that the twins have been separated, "our hearts have become conjoined."

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Thursday, July 8, 2004
14th Week in Ordinary Time
1st Reading: Hos 11:1, 3-4, 8-9
Gospel: Mt 10:7-15

Jesus said to his disciples, "Go and proclaim this message: The kingdom of heaven is near. Heal the sick, bring the dead back to life, cleanse the lepers, and drive out demons. You received this as a gift, so give it as a gift. Do not carry any gold, silver or copper in your purses. Do not carry a traveler's bag, or an extra shirt, or sandals, or walking stick: each laborer is worth his keep.

"When you enter in a town or a village, look for a worthy person and stay there until you leave.

"As you enter the house, wish it peace. If the people in the house deserve it, your peace will be on them. If they do not deserve it, your blessing will come back to you.

"And if you are not welcomed and your words are not listened to, leave that house or that town and shake the dust off your feet. I assure you, it will go easier for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than it will for the people of that town."

Commentary:

"You received this as a gift, so give it as a gift." Or as we sing, "Freely, freely you have received, / Freely, freely give." Giving and receiving are the opposite of buying and selling. In the Anglican Book of Common Prayer there is a prayer for ourselves in time of trouble: "In all time of our tribulation; in all time of our trouble; in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, Good Lord, deliver us." This shows a wise understanding that we are in greater danger from wealth than from poverty. When we use but our way we depend on no one, but when we use just we depend on everyone, so we at [illegible] ways. And so we are well placed for learning something about the mercy of God.

"The first condition of disciples [today's reading] was kind and unpretentious. The great sending out would be later. 'In the whole world' (Mk 16:15). Jesus sent them out to announce the new way of God. He sent them out to pray for they were to show this new side of God to their foes, not just talk about it to servants. Proclaiming the kind news meets being the kind. Someone said, "What you are speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you are saying."

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

CIVIL LAW (LAND TITLES AND DEEDS)—Donation of real property—the law itself is mode of acquiring ownership. donation: needs to an effective transfer of title over the property from the donor to the donee. In donations of immovable property, the law requires for its validity that it should be contained in a public document, specifying therein the property donated and the value of the charges which the donee must satisfy. The Civil Code provides, however, that "[t]itles of ownership or other rights over immovable property, which are not duly inscribed or annotated in the Registry of Property [now Registry of Land Titles and Deeds] shall not prejudice third persons." It is enough, between the parties to a donation of an immovable property, that the donation be made in a public instrument but, in order to bind third persons, the donation must be registered in the registry of Property [Registry of Land Titles and Deeds]. A person dealing with registered land may thus safely rely on the correctness of the certificate of title issued therefore, and he is not required to go beyond the certificate to determine the condition of the property but, where such party has knowledge of a prior existing interest which is unregistered at the time he acquired a right thereto, his knowledge of that prior unregistered interest would have the effect of registration as regards to him. Llantos Vda. Vda. Tiro, Sr., Shoppers Paradise Realty & Development Corp., vs. Elvira F. Reqral, G.R. No. 148175, January 23, 2004]

SC R. E. Trim.

Sandigan orders arrest of Marcos crony Disini

From page A1

nuclear power plant in Morong, Bataan.

The first division of the Sandiganbayan issued the arrest warrant over separate prosecutors, who recently revived the case, admitted they had no idea about Disini's whereabouts.

The arrest warrant against Disini was signed by Justices Teresita Leonardo-De Castro, Diosdado Peralta and Roberto Javier.

But Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio said he would coordinate with the International Police to help track reports that Disini—who is facing graft charges before the Sandiganbayan—had already fled to America.

The antigraft court also ordered local law enforcement agencies to apprehend Disini, whose last known local address is listed as 92 Kennedy Street, North Greenhills, San Juan.

Payoffs

Special Prosecutor Humphrey Mendoza said he set a P94,000 bail for Disini, who was indicted by prosecutors last week on charges that he used his connection to Marcos to ensure that the contract for the nuclear power project was awarded to US firms Westinghouse Electric Corp. and Bechtel and Co.

Ombudsman officials earlier said they had voluminous evidence to prove that Disini "requested and received" $1 million from Hans Kmoch and $17 million from Westinghouse to exchange for the contract to build the nuclear power plant.

The huge payoffs were allegedly received by companies co-owned by Marcos and Disini.

Based on Westinghouse's original offer of a 5 percent commission, commissions on Disini's cut would total as much as $55.6 million.

The Presidential Commission on Good Government earlier charged Disini with allegedly bribing Marcos to induce the latter to award the $2.095-billion nuclear power project to the use-it-or-lose-it firms.

Go-between

In 1974, the PCGG said, Disini was asked by representatives of Westinghouse and Bechtel and flew to see an ailing Marcos in Malacañan.

On the representations of Bechtel, Marcos categorically stated his preference for Westinghouse during a Cabinet meeting on June 6, 1974. The contract was finally executed on Feb. 7, 1976 despite objections from then Solicitor General Estelito P. Mendoza.

But years later, then President Corazon Aquino declared that the government's contract with Westinghouse was fraudulent. The declaration led to the filing in 1988 of local cases in New Jersey against Westinghouse and Burns and Roe.

The contract with Westinghouse was originally above $600 million but is later ballooned to $2.1 billion.

The awarding of the contract to the two US companies effectively excluded other equally competent and qualified bidders, the Office of the Special Prosecutor said.

"What's worse, they were able to subcontract these or two firms owned by Disini and Marcos," Villa-Ignacio said.

The sub-contracting companies—Power Commerce Inc. and the Engineering and Construction Corporation of Asia—which got juicy contracts turned out to be owned by Marcos and Disini.

Disini is married to Herminia Escolin, a cousin of former first lady Imelda Marcos and the family doctor of the former first couple.

SC ruling

Former Ombudsman Aniano Desierto filed a dismissed the charges against Disini for lack of factual and legal basis, but the PCGG showed the case to the Supreme Court and obtained a favorable ruling.

The high tribunal set aside Desierto's May 31, 1997 resolution and Oct. 24, 1997 order clearing Disini of bribery and violation of the Anti-Graft Law.

"To our mind, the whole gamut of evidence presented is more than sufficient to support a criminal complaint for the crimes of corruption of public officials in relation to bribery, and violation of the Anti-Graft Law," the Supreme Court said in a February 2000 ruling.

In its ruling, the high court ordered the filing of graft cases by the PCGG against Disini. But it cleared Disini's wife and co-respondents Angel, Liliane and Lea Disini.

White elephant

"The Bataan nuclear power plant is a monumental billion-dollar monument to white elephant which our impoverished people are still paying for even if they have not benefited from it at all. Let those who oppose its use responsible for this humongous mess be brought to account for their participation," the high court said.

The plant has remained idle through the years. There are plans to subject the nuclear facility into a gas-fired plant. But a feasibility study conducted showed that the conversion of the facility using another type of fuel could cost more than $600 million, an amount enough to finance an entirely new power plant.

Debt burden

Although the plant has remained unutilized, it has remained a debt burden for taxpayers who are paying over $170,000 a day for the mothballed plant.

Since its construction in 1977, the government has spent more than $1.3 billion paying for the power plant. Between 1986 and 1998, Filipino taxpayers paid around of P46.4 billion for debt service of the nuclear plant.

Debt payments for the idle plant would last until 2008.

"MOTION": Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan, co-chair of the joint committee of the National Board of Canvassers, receives from Senate Secretary Oscar Yabes and the House Secretary General Roberto Nazareno the panel's motion during the canvassing as a memoir

US treasure hunter rapped for smuggling

From page A1

protest that thousands of porcelain and pottery pieces dating back to the Ming and Sung dynasties had been found in Kreon's apartments in Los Angeles, California.

Kreon, an ex-Marine and ex-Navy SEAL, claimed he had assembled the collection while living in the Philippines for more than a decade.

According to the report, 7,000 of the pieces were forwarded on the East Coast, where they were stored in a warehouse in South Bound, New Jersey. They were also reportedly insured for $200,000 less.

Gross told the Times that the authentic ones retrieved from the shipwrecks of Pansy and Buyanga islands, and other sites in Mindoro.

He said he meant to share "expected profits" with his Filipino allies, including Mr. Ang, "but I foresaw no first-class recovery."

Preserving our heritage

According to acting Justice Secretary Ms. Merceditas Gutierrez, the Philippines will seek the extradition of Gross, who is believed to be in the United States, once an arrest warrant is issued against him after the case is filed in court.

"This should send out a signal to those who would illegally pilfer our national treasures that the government is serious about preserving our national heritage," Gutierrez said.

The respondents were charged with unlawful exportation of cultural properties under the National Museum Act, failure to register cultural properties, falsification and use of both public and commercial documents, and fraudulent practices under the Tariff and Customs Code.

Gutierrez said the case stemmed from Gross's attempt on March 25, 2002 to ship out a total of 7,336 pieces of artifacts undeclared at US$30,000. Of these, only 34 were blocked by the Bureau of Customs and given back to the museum.

The smuggling attempt happened while Gross was still applying at the museum for permits to have the treasures said to exist. Statutory noted.

To transport the goods, Gross allegedly forged Mehan's signature on a permit to export.

Museum officials freely deny issuing Gross any permit.

Pulled out from auction

The National Bureau Gross has reportedly smuggled more than 30,000 artifacts out of the country and into the United States. Customs officials and other officers were supposed to be auctioned off to dispose last year by Guerrero's in Siwa York, but were pulled out when more than 200,000 on the legality of their acquisition broke.

DOJ officials opted to say more about the status of the collection so as not to jeopardize efforts to recover them.

Ombudsman hit for inaction on GMA plunder raps

From page A8

in a letter to Marcelo. Chavez complained that more than a month after he filed the complaint in connection with alleged irregularities involving P2.2 billion in government funds, the Ombudsman had yet to act on them.

"The plunder charges cannot remain stuck in limbo at the Office of the Ombudsman," he said, adding that Mr. Arroyo's call for a fight against graft would sound hollow if Marcelo gave the impression that he could not touch the highest official of the land.

"But the fight against corruption, in his words—Mr. has to start with the President herself," Chavez said. "Let her answer the charges. And we do not see her counsel summoned and subpoenaed, rumors and jokes and suppliers in this P2.36 billion plunder of taxpayers' money."

Malacañang has said that Mr. Arroyo did not appear a single centavo of public funds for her campaign and that disbursements for government projects cannot come from regular funds already previously cleared.

Marcelo, who is known to be elusive to the media, was not available for comment. But Assistant Ombudsman Ernesto Mores, the spokesperson of the antigraft office, explained that, at this point, Marcelo had nothing to do with the plunder complaints.

Ombudsman's office explains

"It's a rule...the only time that the Ombudsman sees the record of the case is when there is a motion for reconsideration or appeal," Mores said, adding that Mr. Arroyo's call for a fight against graft would sound hollow if Marcelo gave the impression that he could not touch the highest official of the land.

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Ombudsman's office explains

"It's a rule...the only time that the Ombudsman sees the record of the case is when there is a motion for reconsideration or appeal," Mores said.

Chavez said that Gloria's allies in filed the first case, he had yet to be informed by the Ombudsman that the cases had been assigned docket numbers, that they had been raffled to investigators, and that the respondents had been served with copies of the complaints-affidavits.

Chavez said he had also not been told whether the respondents had filed their counter-affidavits and whether the charges had been set for preliminary investigations.

Mores said Marcelo did not see the cases when they were still in the investigation stage.

He said he assumed the cases were in the stage of preliminary investigation and that respondents would soon be asked to submit their counter-affidavits.

Need for patience

"Mr. Chavez has to wait for a little time. There are procedures to follow," Mores said.

Chavez said the complainants "involve an issue that P2.2 billion in taxpayers' money and the government's resources to find out the truth about it[what]."

Chavez has alleged that Mr. Arroyo caused the release of P758 million and P1.1 billion for the Continuing Management Act (CMA) program before and during the elections.

Where's the fertilizer?

The program was reportedly intended to provide farm inputs to the farmers, but the funds allegedly ended up in the campaign kitty of Mr. Arroyo and hundreds of congressmen, governors and mayors. Farmers groups have denied receiving fertilizers from the government.

In a telephone interview, Chavez said that should Marcelo fail to act on his letter in seven days, he would file criminal charges in the Department of Justice against the Ombudsman for the violation of duty and "refusal to discharge his mandate under the Constitution."

Asked if the moves were legally feasible, Chavez replied: "Mino-mo lasin."

St. Stephen's High School

We are inviting all the alumni of St. Stephen's High School to come & join our 87th School Anniversary Celebration Party and Induction of Officers on July 18, 2004 at 11:00 am to be held at the Manila Hotel (Tiesta Pavilion)

See you there!

St. Stephen's High School Alumni Association
For Inquiries contact Ms. Dolly Go & Ms. Tin Le Tuan at 254-8754-59

'Ukay-ukay' at House

From page A1

ukay-ukay," for positions in the House," said Bukidnon People's Coalition Rep. Rodolfo Plaza.

Ukay-ukay is a Visayan word meaning to "dig through." In current use in some localities wholesale or unclaimed items sold second-hand dealers whose buyers have to sift through piles of merchandise when choosing which articles to buy.

The Speakership contenders' theory doesn't see anyone "ungrateful" for having given their nominations to gain support for the speakership bid of anybody," Plaza said in a statement.

Ways and means committee

But Plaza himself has endorsed a colleague to chair the sensitive ways and means committee, the House body in charge of crafting tax measures.

He believes Rep. Prospero Nograles (Lakas, Bayan-Gloria) is the best man for the job, the latter having served on the committee's vice chair in the 13th and 12th Congress.

"I am convinced he [Nograles] is qualified and should be able to lead it with the same wisdom, diligence, perspective, genius and advocacy he oversaw into action," Plaza said.

But an endorsement also led by neophyte Rep. Ronaldo Puno (Kampi, Antipolo) a backing for Taytay Rep. Joel Lagos in head the committee.

Plaza and Lagos, an accountant who headed the Land Bank of the Philippines during the Ramos administration, are both BIR members.

Another key committee chairmanship that is up for grabs is the powerful appropriations committee, one which reviews the annual budget bill that is submitted by Malacañang.

GMA's choice

The Pampanga lawmaking for Rep. Jose Yabolo (Lakas, Abad), who is said to be the personal choice of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Yabolo, the ex-house economist of the Marcos administration, is the main defender of the President's economic managers with whom he has recently been in talks to come up with measures to cover a fiscal crisis.

But Rep. Rolando Andaya, Jr. (LP, Cavite) says he's fighting to retain control of the committee that he headed during the 12th Congress.

Mr. Arroyo won in Salcedo's district in Albay and lost in Andaya's district.

The executive bloc in the House appears not to be having the same problems as their majority counterparts.

Minority leadership

Rep. Agapito "Boy" Aquino (Lakas, ng Demokratikong Pilipino, Makati) said opposition legislators were reviewed last night to decide who will stand as minority leader in the House.

Aquino said that a decision might be reached tonight or by noon today.

The opposition is choosing between Aquino and Rep. Rolando Zamora (Partido ng Masang Pilipino, San Juan).

"What we can promise is that we will have a responsible and constructive opposition in the House," Aquino said. (See related story on Page A8.)

Surprise: House returns P50M in savings

By Cecilia Pablo

BUTUAN) Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. yesterday turned over P50 million in savings by the House of Representatives to the National Treasury.

It was the first time that the chamber returned savings and, at the same time, set an example for austerity and discipline for government offices in this time of fiscal troubles, De Venecia said.

De Venecia was in Mindanao yesterday together with congressmen of the ruling Lakas-CMD party to whip-start their campaign efforts for the Presidential Municipal A...

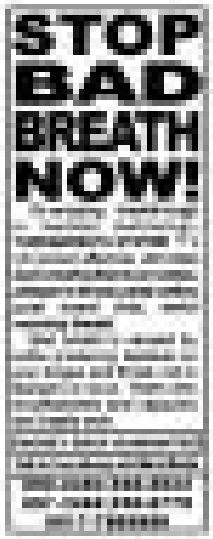
"We are proud of this modest achievement in the light of how [lackluster] and not even corrupt call for illegal spending by the rest of government," De Venecia said in a letter to Mr. Ermita.

The P50-million savings covered the period Jan. 1 to June 30, 2004.

De Venecia and other Lakas leaders are expected to be back at the Palace this evening for a meeting with the President.

New French Embassy numbers

THE EMBASSY of France announced its new telephone numbers. In addition to 857-6999 and consular section, 857-6900, the numbers are: Chancery, 857-0900; Press, 857-6902; Cultural, 857-6904; and Consular, 857-6901.



The WORLD

Editor Lawrence K. Fabros

Deadly bird flu erupts anew in Asia

BANGKOK—The deadly strain of bird flu virus killed 34 people in Southeast Asia early this year has erupted again in Thailand and China, but authorities in both countries said on Wednesday the outbreaks were under control.

Thailand said it had confirmed outbreaks of the H5N1 strain of bird flu, which first emerged in Hong Kong in 1997, at two farms near Suphan Buri north of Bangkok.

China said the virus had struck a farm in central Anhui province, 200 km west of Shanghai.

Both governments were quick to tell worried populations that the new outbreaks were being dealt with decisively and a repeat of the unprecedented epidemic that swept across much of Asia earlier this year was unlikely.

"The outbreak has come under control," the state-official China News Service said on its website at www.chinanews.com.cn about the Anhui outbreak.

Nevertheless, a provincial official said the health chief ordered the infected hens and those who had close contact with them had been isolated and were under observation.

Officials ordered the culling of all poultry within a 3-km radius of the farm. Poultry within a 9-km radius were being vaccinated.

"Now we will strengthen prevention and control of local agricultural product markets to prevent the spread of bird flu to humans by eating," the provincial official said.

In Thailand, senior officials said the outbreaks appeared to be confined to the two farms in suburbs near the towns of Ayutthaya and Phetchaburi. There, veterinarians were on alert for signs of infection among neighboring farms.

"So far, chickens have died only at the two farms," Deputy Agriculture Minister Newin Chidchob said. "We have been monitoring all areas throughout the country 24 hours a day."

"We do not need to destroy other chickens in nearby farms," said livestock department chief Thiraf Limsiwong. "The situation has been brought under control because no chickens in nearby farms have died."

The cause of the outbreaks was under investigation, he said.

China blocked its new outbreak on migratory birds, which were thought to have spread the disease through Asia early this year as they headed south to warmer climes during the winter.

That epidemic created new fears in many places, although human deaths were confined to Vietnam, where 19 people died, and Thailand, where the virus killed eight people.

About 100 million fowl died or were culled, more than 40 million of them in Thailand, which had been the world's fourth largest chicken exporter.

So far in the new outbreak, 8,000 chickens had been slaughtered at the infected farm near Ayutthaya and more than 700 on the Suphan Buri farm, the Thai officials said.

It was unclear how many birds in Anhui died of the disease, first reported on July 1, or how many had been culled and vaccinated.

Thailand has never declared its epidemic over.

China said in March it had stamped out the disease but said bird flu could spread again as the weather warmed up and wave from migrant.

The World Health Organization expressed caution at the time, saying it believed no more cases might yet remained the virus. —Reuters

Yemen charges 6 al-Qaida suspects for USS Cole blast

SANA, Yemen—A Yemeni security court on Wednesday charged six Yemenis in the planning of the October 2000 bombing of a US destroyer and said they belonged to Osama bin Laden's terrorist network, opening the first trial in the Cole case.

Seventeen American sailors were killed when two suicide bombers in an explosive-laden boat rammed the USS Cole as it refueled in the southern port city of Aden. The bombing was blamed on bin Laden's al-Qaeda terror network.

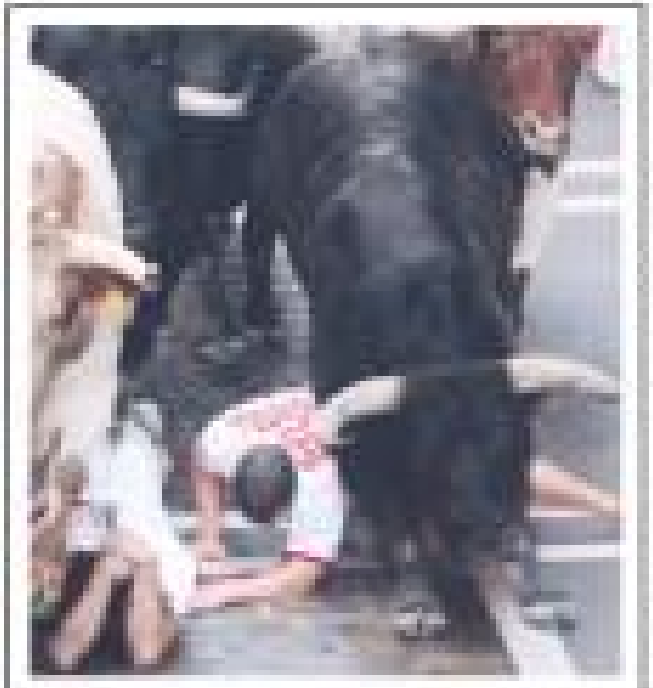
Among the six charged in Sana's Wednesday was accused mastermind Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, who is in US custody, but it was another seven. The other five were in court Wednesday.

Al-Nashiri was accused of planning and funding the attack and making the call detonating who carried it out. The United States announced al-Nashiri's arrest in November 2002, saying he had been detained in an undisclosed country and transferred to American custody.

Western diplomats have identified the country as the United Arab Emirates, and Emirates officials confirmed that in December 2002.

US officials believe the Saudi-born al-Nashiri is a close associate of Bin Laden, in addition to the Cole attack, he is suspected of helping direct the 1998 bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. US officials say al-Nashiri gave telephone orders to the Cole bombers from the Emirates.

It is a trial that had been expected to start for delayed many times. Judge Hadi al-Qadasi read a list of charges that included forming an armed gang to carry out criminal acts against the interests of the state, belonging to al-Qaida, receiving instructions and forging documents. The defendants pleaded not guilty to the charges. AP



BALL HAM
This man falls in front of bulls during the first bull run ("encierro") of the San Fermin Festival in Pamplona, Spain. AFP

Smallest vertebrate discovered

SYDNEY—Australian scientists claimed Wednesday they had discovered the world's smallest fish, which lives for just two months and does not grow big, reports say.

The 12mm Infertilis, one of 11 new species of fish described in the Australian Museum's Records Journal, weighs in at just one milligram and grows to a maximum length of seven millimeters.

Scientists at the museum have now applied for it to be included on the Guinness Book of World Records as the world's smallest vertebrate.

"It's a bit of a new factor that we have it in our collection," the museum's Jane Fyndes told reporters.

A researcher at the museum first collected a specimen of the fish in 1999 from a small lagoon in south Queensland state but scientists in Australia know little about its biology. AFP

New Iraq premier gets emergency powers

BAGHDAD—Iraq's interim government unveiled a new security law on Wednesday that grants it wider powers to combat insurgents and foreign Muslim militants.

Just hours before the announcement, which had been twice delayed, guerrillas fired several mortar rounds in Baghdad, wounding eight people, police and hospital staff said.

Several more had when two rounds hit a medical center near the office of Prime Minister Iyad Allawi's Iraqi National Accord party in the western district of Mansour police said.

Another round landed in a residential street in the Sunni district in the south of the capital.

The US military had no immediate comment on the blasts, but said guerrillas had killed four US members in the United Muslim boardlands west of the Iraqi capital on Tuesday.

The Pentagon says 848 US service members have killed in action in Iraq since the start of the war last year.

Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari has said the new security law empowers the government to impose curfews, set up checkpoints and search and detain suspects. The measures will be temporary and will apply only in parts of Iraq.

Allawi's office and ministers would explain details of the National Safety Law later on Wednesday.

The widely anticipated new body been delayed several times as the government, which ends over sovereignty from the US-led occupation on June 30, ironed out the details and assembled with US officials, political sources said.

Allawi's government has said it also plans to restore the death penalty suspended during the US-led occupation, and offer a temporary amnesty for rebels who fought the Americans.

A suicide car bombing that killed six people in the town of Dhuluiya, north of Baghdad, on Sunday broke a relative lull in violence since the interim government formally regained sovereign powers from a US-led coalition twice on June 28.

Iraq's wind oil exports resumed in normal levels after repairs to a pipeline damaged by weekend sabotage that had helped send world oil prices to one month high.

Exports were back to 1.7 million barrels a day after the sabotage had cut them to 1 million, a shipping agent said.

Allawi, like Washington, blames Saddam Hussein supporters and foreign militants for sabotage, guerrilla attacks and kidnappings aimed at making post-war Iraq impossible to rule.

Till defense of Hoshyar said 90 of U.700 security detainees in Iraq were foreign fighters, about half of them Syrians.

Others were from Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

Gunmen filled militants have kidnapped an Egyptian driver who was delivering petrol from Saudi Arabia to the US military in Iraq, al-Jazeera television reported.

Jassem aired a video tape from the unnamed group, which said it represents the "legitimate Iraqi resistance," showing four armed men standing behind the metal bodies, identified by the video as an Ismail Muhammed Sayed al-Jaabouri.

The Egyptian Embassy in Baghdad and US military said they had no information about the reported abduction.

Sources of foreigners from been kidnapped in Iraq since April. At least four have been killed, including an American and a South Korean beheaded by the terrorist al-Tawhid and Jihad group led by al-Qaida ally Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

US planes bombed a suspected Zarqawi "safe house" in the western city of Fallujah on Monday, killing 13 people, in the fifth such strike in three weeks. Allawi said his government had supplied the intelligence that led to the air raid.

"The people of Iraq will not tolerate terrorist groups or those who collaborate with any other foreign fighters roam on the Iraqi territory, such terrorists or their accomplices," he said.

There was no word on the fate of a kidnapped Lebanese-born US Marine reported to have been released on Tuesday.

Ahmed Ali Hussein's brother Imad, speaking from the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli, said the family had received word Hussein was alive and had been freed in the early hours.

"The status of Corporal Hussein is optimized," a US military spokesperson said on Wednesday. However, 21, has been missing from his unit since June 13. Reuters

Car bomb kills 9 in Iraq

BAGHDAD, Iraq—The deadliest car bombing since Iraq regained sovereignty ripped through this eastern town Wednesday, killing at least nine people, while an attack on a northern gas pipeline threatened power supplies.

The suicide car bomber struck at about 4:15 p.m. near a house in Khalis where a memorial service was being held for two Iraqis killed in an attack on Sunday in the insurgent town of Baquba, a local police chief said.

"The driver driven toward Iraqis set up for a memorial service," said Lieut. Wahid Abdul Hakim, police chief of Diyala province, home to Khalis and Baquba.

At least nine people were killed and 37 wounded in the bombing north of the capital, according to hospital sources.

On Khalis street, where the bomb exploded, is near store destruction. Many homes and cars were destroyed and body parts were strewn all over the road.

US troops rushed to the scene of the attack as people in the area lined them into the air in the alarming chaos, according to an AFP correspondent.

Baquba, 60 km from Baghdad, was the scene of street fighting and attacks in late June that killed dozens of people, mostly Iraqi policemen and insurgents.

Disaster also struck in the north as a gas pipeline feeding electricity power plants in central and northern Iraq was attacked and set ablaze near the oil city of Kirkuk, energy officials said, rendering oil more power-cuts.

"A device exploded taking the pipeline about 90 km south of Kirkuk, sparking a fire," said Hazem Hassan, the head of the Northern Gas Company which is based in Kirkuk, 250 km north of Baghdad. AFP

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Getting tough

WILL some of his colleagues in Congress are mercifully shooting down every measure to raise revenues and renew-all a fiscal crisis, Alfrey Bay, Joey Salceda has come up with some sensible and practical proposals to share up scarce government resources. Salceda, who will chair the appropriations committee when the new Congress opens, has proposed a package of "painful policy measures" aimed at reducing the budget deficit which has been running at around P200 billion yearly for the past few years.

EDITORIAL

The package includes the enactment of new revenue measures, which a number of administration lawmakers have already vowed to oppose. But the more innovative ones involve the generation of savings and the more prudent use of existing resources.

Thus, Salceda is pushing for both simple measures (like the recycling of supplies) and some big sacrifices (like making directors of government corporations give up their year-end bonuses and their share of the profits). In fact, these corporations will be required to remit all their profits to the national government.

Salceda estimates that national government agencies can save as much as P20 billion by adopting further cost-cutting measures, such as, by declaring a moratorium on travel and training seminars. A similar amount can be freed for the use of the national government if the Local Government Units would settle for an IRA instead of demanding the immediate remittance of their internal revenue allotments.

Congress should also pitch in, says Salceda, by contributing P20 billion of the congressional pork barrel to finance the projects that would implement the 10-point agenda of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Salceda seemed to underscore the urgency of putting all these measures in place by saying these would allow the national government "to buy time ... to meet its immediate cash-flow requirements for basic operations while allowing the economy to grow." Besides, he pointed out, the whole package is designed to spread the burden among all sectors: the national and local governments, government agencies and government corporations, Congress, business and labor.

The question is, will everyone be willing to accept his share of the burden? Or does the administration have the political will to impose the burden on everyone equally?

For instance, if the administration really wants to take away the lavish perks and privileges of the officials of government corporations, it doesn't have to wait for Salceda to preach the virtue of sacrifice. All it has to do is enforce Memorandum Order No. 20 signed by Mr. Arroyo on June 29, 2001. Its relevant provision says that no official of any government corporation can receive a salary that is more than twice that of an official of equivalent rank in the national government. But how many officials, say, in the Social Security System or the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp., continue to receive three, four or more times the President's monthly salary of P57,650?

And why of all people, should Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin rush to reassure the senators and congressmen that they can keep their pork after Salceda "shocked" them with his suggestion to share it with the executive department? More than any other fund in the national budget, the pork barrel has been shown to be the biggest single source of unabated and unnecessary spending as well as graft and corruption. Retaining that item in the budget at this time, when most lawmakers are looking for ways to recoup the millions they spent during the campaign, is like throwing pork to crocodiles. Where then is the sharing of burden and pain?

Before the administration asks the Filipino people for further sacrifice, it should first demand the same of its friends and political allies. The President has vowed to make things tough for those who have it easy. It's tough to find any group that fits that description better than our lawmakers who tap the pork barrel as a ready source of easy money. Will she ever be able to summon the will to get tough on them? Or was that all empty talk like Joseph Estrada's "walang kaibahan ng ekal, walang kaipokan pare"?

The Filipino people should know soon enough.

Misplaced hopes

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

"I DITEN wonder whether we do not owe our hopes too much upon constitutions, upon laws and upon courts," the late Justice learned Hand warned in a meeting May 1944 speech. "Believe me, these are false hopes." [1]

Americans entered their constitution on basic issues, like the First Amendment's freedom of speech, religion and peaceful assembly. The Clinton-assigned Miss Lindsay and indeed a previous gatecrashing private property that the Bill of Rights protects (Bird's nests in Bayan Mutya, doubtpoints, Gabriela and others.)

In contrast, we often fob to tamper our charters. Ferdinand Marcos couched in the innocuous "Transitory Provisions" an disguise his dictatorship as "Iron Society."

"Freedom lies in the hearts of men and women," he added. "When it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can avail to maintain it." [2]

Today are we pressed to "fine-pencil" the law? A constitution is not self-implementing. Words bedim, whether ordinary citizens or elected officials, most carry out its mandates. Failure of Congress to pass political dynasties is only one example.

The presidential system has been "historically associated with political progress," from universal suffrage to economic growth. US scholar Juanig Linz has noted. Singapore, have nonetheless surpassed over the rajahs of our presidential system.

The Cicero Eleven senator judges cultivate impeachment, in stealing the "second resignation." The Blue Ribb demanded it further to their vendetta impeachment against Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr.

Unabashed partisanship degenerated the presidential contests. And these schemes erupted over discredited candidacies, piggybacking on the "country's lack of indomitable will-to-power.

In response, Sen. Juan Ponce and Palenero's Rep. Abraham Mitra called for a nonpartisan convention (Con-Con). President Macapagal-Arroyo suggested delegates be elected each one barangay (with constituents?) every time. This would accelerate a shift to the federal system, she says.

Speaker Jose de Venecia prefers a consultative assembly (Consas). Under Recto Bill (Senate Resolution Nos. 1, Legislators would assume themselves members of the house/law.

Hearings against ranking Charter changers have been flagged. Senate President Franklin Drilon and some house/law groups point out that life barangay-elected Pres. the Pres-think. In a barangay assembly, they say, an excellent assessment would be relatives, just like to turnouts.

Misplaced hopes can result in skewed priorities. And are add-ons would notice to those who have the energy to pay for religious stables of long neglected under those underlying issues, stirring waste like pork barrel and bloated payrolls to shield's schools and poverty alleviation.

Posting competitive officials, like Bimby Binamin, to partner...just no government-minister running must-fink de Casero, is exactly the best way to short-circuit reform.

Still, elected leaders may press ahead with unconstitutional maladies. Election victim are unthinkable. If so, we should study by the death record. Read those who have changed sub-ma Ocean Resolution 49 (and its house counterpart, Senate Bill 1830) to cross-reference.

If the country were to "take stock into the 21st century," HB 49 underwrites argued, "[if] international issues be devoted on to Charter. It can know who changes Sec. 1 to 146 proposed. But all were ayes of Mr. 147 to the mean with the controversial issues on the exercise of office.

Closely legislators crunching the Constitution would "collect Congress exists "a place where Americans and Indian voice be wouldn't equals" as the editor H. L. Mencken once wished. "But the hearing table would be marked in the lines of Judas." In the events, both of the Senate's presiding reforms, torpedoed HB 49 and SR 18 dead.

A constitution is not supposed to atone. It must be revised in line with a changing world and power's same requirement. Thus, it's flawed principles "represent only a method by which the state is fortified and its permanent hopes." The last thing you do is tinker in haste.

There are legislators of integrity. But they're outnumbered by "political gratitudes." "political greatness drops the noble hopes of those who put their hot for power," Mencken makes once said.

Amending the amendment ropes to be retained to delegates, elected to a convention. There would be more chances for reason, free of partisan politics. Or, as Lincoln said of women, waved by various tactics stand spoke about.

"The spirit of liberty is the spirit of Hillsdale, once two thousand years ago, sought mankind the lesson that it has never learned, but never can forget," Justice Hand told us that wrote May morning. This "there may be a kingdom where the least shall be heard and considered, side by side, with the greatest."

[1] [2]

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Much like Plaridel

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

(Conrado's latest happened to a more deserving person. Deguito legislated in the first election of the University of the Philippines' Plaridel Award, which was launched last Sunday in the dawn.

The award, of course, is named after Plaridel as in it. del Pilar, the Filipino who founded La Solidaridad in Spain, which became the base of the Filipino and Spanish colonial authorities in the Philippines during the last quarter of the 19th century. Del Pilar wrote under the nom de plume of Plaridel, a name that has since become synonymous with the Filipino nationalist, a name for truth and love of country. Del Pilar himself endured the most horrible poverty to put out La Solidaridad, scrounging for typewriters in trash to get him through the task. He died of tuberculosis at 41 in destitution.

The award seeks to continue in giving the award in Egypt. The only other person I know who has continued that is it is Joe Burgos, but I don't know if the award is given only to the living. Or only to those who've been put away. If it's only to those with cancer, a fight that deteriorates only in body. To the day he died, he seemed oblivious to it, taking as keen an interest in what was happening around him as he did before he was struck down by the disease. Until the end, he had every right to say it. But among the living, yes, no one deserves the award more than Egypt.

A video presentation during the awarding ceremony recalled Egypt's accomplishments. High on the list was his putting up Mr. and Mr. and the Philippine Daily Inquirer during the Marcos years, which exposed the evils of martial law and helped topple the dictatorship. Its headline highlight was his pinning up Penny Time's cover story on, which exposed the evils of the Duty regime and helped topple another tyranny. Both were extremely perilous enterprises, though the martial law publications were arguably more so, in both cases, Egypt risked life and limb to expose the evils so that the world and as well as the knew it. Like Plaridel.

It brought a tear to many an eye. Egypt's many spouted when she spoke, the honest was unwatchering. But over the ceremony, she made light of things. She found it not a little amusing, she said, that she should be compared to Plaridel. Certainly, she said, she could not have endured his worldly indulgences. Like dancing. And certainly she said, she did not possess the same epic capacity for heroism. Plaridel was a true hero in his defiance of Spanish tyranny while she was just "a chronicler of a chronic mess." Those lines her words, she merely donne to do certain things, and her choice turned out to be the right one. She just happened to be in the right place at the right time. She just happened to be lucky. She just happened to be Egypt.

Well, I've said something about this before but it bears repeating. Journals doesn't always have to serve a fearful hero or a stern hero, it can always serve an easy smile or sassy a light step. I do not owe to all the times grand interest who said, "The good doesn't always lucky." That was in response to remarks that the arts just lucky to find a way to win, even in worthiness hopeless situations. It takes talent to be lucky, it takes instinct to be lucky to know when to be lucky. But that means to say that is not luck. But luck isn't something that just happens, it is something that is created.

The artist rising may be said of being in the right place at the right time. It takes talent to be in the right place at the right time. It takes instinct to be in the right place at the right time, it takes practice not be in the right place at the right time. Which means to the end that being in the right place at the right time doesn't just happen, it is willed. I remember again Edith Tiempo's observation about the late Senator Cherry," about someone who imagines how he could have been heroic if he had only been born in a heroic time. But as the poem suggests astutely, he could never be heroic at any time because any time is a good time to be heroic in if you are the right person at that make us heroic, it is what are do with them that makes us so. Anytime is the right time, any place is the right place, it is up to us to make them so.

It is not just Egypt's definition of tyranny—making life and death—to do so that makes her worthy to wear the laurels of Plaridel. Though that by itself is no mean feat. The traits of courage shown by Egypt and Joe, both of whom bucked the tide of those required by fear by the Marcos regime, are not to be sneezed at easy. The fact that Egypt laughed her way through it is no less a testament to the lightness of the theme, it is a testament to the strength of the spirit that Egypt was given to oppression, even if she had to laugh her way through it.

But even more than that, it is Egypt's definition of tenderness and compassion that makes her a worthy successor of Plaridel. Just a few of those who gave up everything to be with their families to bear the naked friendship and kinship to repeat imagery. Though close to Cory Aquino, she took her government to task during her time, in particular championing the cause of the Hacienda Luisita 12, the workers who opposed the 75 hours story. Though close to many public officials, she rebuked them when they overstepped their bounds. That is the greater feat, choosing the other hearty parts of courage, preferring to remain friends with rather than false company. That was what felled many of those who fought Marcos not too long ago, not the baptisms of martial law but the easy comfort that came after. Egypt would not succumb to it, even if she had to have her heart broken.

She says she bravely dunned to the lists of her. Others will say she also helped to make the music she danced to.

Challenge to Kabayan

Political Tidbits

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

ON ASSIGNING the Department of Social Welfare and Development to her running mate, Vice President Noli de Castro, President Macapagal-Arroyo lashed up a storm of controversy early in her campaign. The resignation of Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman, effective October, has triggered howls of protest mainly from civil society, from whose ranks she sprang. But we must bear in mind—especially in this season of appointments and its opposite, removal—that the Soliman family cabinet years serve completely at the President's pleasure.

* * *

This columnist protested the ouster of Undersecretary Ester Garcia from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources a year and a half ago, and of Jesse Lina from the Department of Interior and Local Government a few months ago. Those moves sent good men who have served with distinction and with their own reputations unsullied by scandal or any whiff of corruption, under some of her colleagues. Soliman is one of the most respected people in the Cabinet, even appreciated by her rivals. On the other hand, it's time we stopped underestimating the power of GMA distribution regime having to let her go, there was nothing much she could do about it. The Vice President was offered the National Anti-Poverty Commission, but it seems his mind was fixed on the DSWD. It was, as Soliman put it, a "political commitment." From what I hear, more than losing her job, minor rotation was the way she was "written" by GMA. The offer to Ms. de Castro dates June 28.

* * *

Perhaps, if Kabayan Noli would care to become the liaison of the people, he might agree not to take the DSWD. If only to keep someone of Soliman's rare caliber in the official family. He is undoubtedly his way to the seconding before office, and perhaps he would have no problem with it to be taking the SAFC, which could be a crucial bridge between the President and the masses, a real instrument for poverty alleviation, instead of the flimsies's job that's in the DSWD's. His acceptance of the SAFC would raise him up in the public esteem.

* * *

The group [illegible] Fiesta mentioned which is said to have revised GMA's original party's mandate by bolstering Filipino, has been evaluating that while it's supporting Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. for President in 2010, it will continue charismatic and a transparent process of selection, but those negative statements are coming on too strong, and the data seemed to be by the President's camp. Lakas, the party of charismatic, are beginning to favor the "opposite." The neophyte like to say they're making noises now instead of "rehearsing" the house, but it's difficult to take them seriously considering that even the Speaker, Prospero Nograles, has an unresolved graft case dating back to his term in the House during the Erap regime.

* * *

If we have a GMA, it seems Indonesia will be having an "SBY" for president. At last Monday's dinner given by Speaker De Venecia for the delegates of the Association of Asian Parliaments for Peace, which the Senate had the chance to chat with Indonesian charge d'affaires Alexander Lumintang about the first direct vote balloting for president in Indonesia since independence from the Dutch 54 years ago. He reminded that of the 165 absentee votes cast at the Indonesian Embassy, over 800 went to retired General and former Minister of Security Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, with President Megawati Sukarnoputri and former Vice-President Ameer Roesyn Chief Belkaros coming in second and third, respectively. Lumintang opined that this reflected the people's desire for change. But after SBY failed to muster over 50 percent of the votes (out of 153 million eligible voters) needed to be proclaimed president, there's a runoff election will be held between SBY and Megawati this September, which SBY is expected to win.

* * *

The Indonesian result would strengthen the hand of the reformist middle have others GMA fought such a close fight with FPJ and some people in Indonesia see victory. But others also interesting about the Indonesian elections, where the campaigning was relatively peaceful, with a number of foreign powers, such as the United States and France, advertised heavily in terms of logistics, equipment, etc. Lumintang admitted that private funds were also used, but the campaign of electronic days, but I suppose under the circumstances, given the huge size of the archipelago which has 240 million people scattered in over 17,000 islands, and there are a number of reports of its economy foreign assistance in its elections couldn't be helped. What is important is that the world's most populous Muslim nation has taken a giant stride toward democracy.

* * *

It was also interesting, though, to learn to election results in Indonesia that were different from our mass-media system. While the elections were generally peaceful, GMA bureau chief Mario Mesa noted that so many voters failed to appear the ballot during the voting, thus making votes when they struck the key to the name of their candidates. As a result, so many votes had to be invalidated. In the end, the margin of victory was enough to affect the overall results. Truly this is one time to be weighed in elections.

Decaf

I LOVE coffee. I love it so much that just hearing the word makes my mouth water. I've progressed from a mere cup from my dad's morning cup when I was 5 to several mocha frapes on Friday night outs to large doses of good old Nescafe brew that keeps me awake for my thesis deadline. I love writing while cued at the ceiling at two in the morning, unable to sleep because of the caffeine I gulped down in lieu of a decent dinner.

Caffeine gives me intense concentration. The sweet aroma of a freshly brewed cup, the warm hot night on the tongue, the fuzzy and giddy feeling I get from it—it's like being in love for the first time. And much like falling in love, after the caffeine wears out, I crave for more.

Young Blood

April Umali

Life wasn't so linear before the young ave-thinking about. What are they looking for? Thoughts on career jumps? The 9—it's like being in love for the first time. And much like falling in love, after the caffeine wears out, I crave for more.

But unlike before when the instant coffee in our cupboard was enough to make me happy, I came to crave fresher, and then I wanted fancy concoctions in cafés. I kept looking for the best place where I could get my coffee. And I was never satisfied.

My coffee-love turned from loving just something creative into a natural, emotional, spiritual experience. I drank coffee as I cried my first heartbreak with my best friend right after the end of a four-year relationship. I drank coffee as I met new people, cried to be friends with them, and ended up ignoring their text messages. I drank coffee alone, while leaning for God's voice in my heart, or thinking of life as printed. I drank coffee to celebrate, and I drank it, too, to drown my college pals-and I was 90 percent caffeine and 10 percent water. My head, a mess, always told me that one much caffeine was bad.

Then one ordinary day, after downing my usual morning cup, I suddenly felt light-headed. My heart felt like it wanted to burst out of my chest; it beat so violently it could scare the neighbors. I panicked. My hands felt cold. I was nauseated. Apparently, I'd had too much caffeine. My body started reacting negatively to it, and I trembled all over.

After that, I couldn't drink my coming brew again. There was only one solution: detox.

I turned to decaf. At first, I felt it was the "weaker" kind of coffee, the type that equally "weak" people drank. And so I tried going caffeine-free for several days.

But one day I just had to drink coffee, so I went to my favorite coffee shop. The guy behind the counter asked, "Decaf?"

I froze. I never thought I would answer that question in the affirmative. I started to kiss for a long time until he repeated the question. Finally I said yes.

I sat down for some time, the last three hours at the café. I did not want to drink. I should have ordered hot chocolate instead. I closed my eyes. I debated with myself what fact to do and my decaf or take it home in my tumbler.

And then I heard God's voice. Sure, I'm not a saint. I didn't hear it in my ears, but in my heart. My heart, which was pounding from too much caffeine, felt less intense, as if assuming its each this very word. He said, "The true meaning of life is not being comfortable all the time. It is trusting that something good would come out of adversity. Like faith, it's a feeling you do not see, and believing in things you do not know."

I closed my eyes. My eyes. I wanted to listen more, to hear Him more. But He had stopped speaking. And then I knew I just had to trust Him that the caffeine, He can sometimes hurt us. We may be used to doing and having things that we think we can't control or live. And then we become addicted to the good life. We become blind to things that are beyond our own perspective. We become unable to feelings other than our own. But God understand breaks us because He has to be in control. We may have to my something very different than what we have become comfortable with. We may have to learn something by heart, to go by something, say goodbye to something. In the end, the God who might have broken our hearts, isn't into let the God who will heal and restore us.

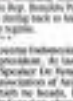
I know it sounds a lot crazy to compare coffee with life, and to equate drinking decaf instead to a cup of faith. But, well, that morning, in my little corner of the world, with a warm mug of decaf in my hands, God spoke to me, quietly and clearly. And my life was changed forever.

April Umali, 23, is a freelance writer. She is taking up graduate studies at the University of the Philippines in Diliman.

US steps back on immunity

Human Face

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo



THE LATEST good news is that the US has become a retreat.

The US has withdrawn its bid for immunity—through the removal of Resolution 1487—at the UN Security Council deliberations. Annexed would have meant a grant of a 12-month period of immunity to peacekeeping personnel from countries that are not State Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The US is not a State Party to the protocol.

The Philippine Coalition for the International Criminal Court, a member of an international coalition supported by 1168 organizes, hailed the development and said the UN move to avert immunity for peacekeeping personnel from countries that are not State Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The US is not a State Party to the protocol.

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According to the Asian Forum on Human Rights and Development (Forum Asia), Resolution 1487 is the second time the US has failed to secure the support of the Rome Statute because it exempts a certain class of people from international justice. It undermines the authority of the ICC, it undermines its core jurisdiction and forces the Security Council to intervene in the work of the ICC.

The development in the UN upholds the integrity of the ICC and all State international justice and the rule of law. Countries that hold fast to the Rome Statute include Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Brazil, Chile, France, Germany, Spain and Romania.

By the way, the Philippines, represented by Ambassador Lauro Baja, director for Security Council Affairs, the deliberations on Resolution 1487. The Philippines' vote went for Resolution 1487 despite the overwhelming vote against it. The US, seeing the vote, withdrew. With its position, the US is now isolated from the rest of the world.

The US never had ties with governing opposition among Security Council members and the international community. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has expressed his concern over the matter, at last, in conversing last June. Annan said: "But allow me to express the hope that this does not become an annual exercise. If it did, I fear the world would interpret it as meaning that the Council wished to claim absolute and permanent immunity for people serving the operations it establishes or authorizes. If that were to happen, it would undermine not only the authority of the ICC but also the authority of the Council and the organization of [incomprehensible]."

With Resolution 1487 in the trash can, the ICC can now move up with the investigation and prosecution of its first case filed by the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Although the US and Iraq are not signatories of the Rome Statute, non-signatories could be prosecuted if the complaining country is a signatory. Washington does not recognize the UN mandated route.

Here are some comments of media instruments abroad on the US reversal.

The Guardian argued that "by outmaneuvering a resolution on moral principles, the US has opened the door for its troops for another year, the mighty US diplomacy machine throw itself into reverse gear to betray the most means has American soldiers or civilians could now be brought before the ICC by a member country or by the UN Security Council itself, after the current immunities expire on June 30. In practice, it is not going to happen. Washington has done bilateral 'non-surrender' deals with 34 nations. The ICC jurisdiction does not extend to Iraq and the chief prosecutor will anyway be fully occupied hunting down war criminals in the Congo. Not can [sic] overlook be interpreted as a sign that the US begin unchallenged to do what it wants. It is precisely that the American soldier accused of war crimes could be tried and judged anywhere other than in an American court."

So, it is all for naught.

The Australian said the US move could raise "concern that Washington, which does not recognize the UN mandated court, might follow through in retreat to shut down or misperceiving the UN and its role in peacekeeping operations."

The Chicago Tribune, the Bulletin from and the Orlando Sentinel each has was the result of intense lobbying on the part of human rights groups and that the retreat has led what may be the first concession signed on the ICC by the Bush prison abuse scandal on American foreign relations.

The Irish Times reported on a Chinese ambassador saying the prime abuse scandal involving US soldiers undermining "may pressures seriously under any circumstances," he said.

The New York Times said that while the ICC action may have little practical effect because neither the US nor Iraq recognized the treaty, the decision was perhaps seen as a setback to the US's intervention for seeking to manipulate the new court by negotiating bilateral exemptions for Americans the world over. The Times editorial, entitled "Bad Days for Justice," declared that 139 days, but from a 10-year term. The US also insisted that the UN Security Council and a weight that the resolution of the willing don't have."

This new "Annan's victory," the New York Times said, "is a setback for the UN's ability to enforce international law."

Asia Forum is now urging Asian governments to join the 98 countries that have ratified the Rome Statute to actively participate in defending the Rome Statute effective. Forum Asia secretary general Gothom Arya said "the region stands to gain the most from the Court's chief mandate to combat impunity, a function currently defended by the international community in Iraq and Afghanistan."

But the Philippines, by the way, though a signatory of the Rome Statute, has not given its signature to ratify it. We are somewhere on this. We are not among the 98 countries that have ratified it. President Macapagal-Arroyo has not pushed for the completion of both Senate and House of Representatives. What scary. Can she defy the ire?

Send comments to ceresp@hkbsh.com.ph

Meeting the Veep

The Long View

Manuel L. Quezon III

UNDER THE AUSPICES of the Office of the Presidential Assistant for Historical Affairs, I was privileged to take a tour by the Vice President of the Philippines and his staff earlier this week. The briefing was a crash course on the history of the vice presidency.

It was the first time I've been to the veep's office under its new occupant. While the location is unimpressive and deprecating—a series of suites in the Philippine International Convention Center decorated in what can only be described as Soviet Society realism—the ambiance and the dynamics of the office have obviously changed.

During the reign of Vice President Teofisto Guingona, the office resembled an old folks' home. Full of ancient retainers, it was the kind of office that channeled overall by a departure lounge sort of atmosphere. Guingona's dour of staff was a perfect practitioner, a veteran, who preferred to reminisce about his experiences as a young lieutenant fighting for the Japanese in Bataan. The office remained with a sort of historical quiescence.

In contrast, the system, new regime as the veep's office is overwhelmingly young. Filled with twenty-somethings and thirty-somethings, the experience reminiscent characterizing the waiting rooms of the powerful for up-and-comings. Eager young staffers armed with cell phones responded, dashing in and outer-way that disguises their obvious aversion to the mundane. Even the veep's chief of staff was a young man—just long doing what, in the mysterious way of our government, was never clear.

The veep's own office was a mix of neat-planning new furniture mess. The large papered in, set-looped out of our room, he shook everyone's hands, and the briefing began.

There are politicians who suffer from the inability to descend into their home or cave, how to lie rest. In a veteran broadcaster, the Veep doesn't suffer it one day problem. The gentleman is at least by customary standpoint. The first part of the briefing was an overview of the history of the vice presidency, including some dusty issues of interpretation. One, the official website of the vice president contains two diagonal inclusions in the issue of vice presidents. The first being Abelardo Subaldo who held the vice presidency, but he was only elected vice president in 1949. The Supreme Court at that was ruled only a vice president of one of our six term administration. Definitely, not of the first established under the Malolos Constitution, if we count Abelardo as the first republic, then anything that comes before that—our time in the Philippine years, otherwise we're done the Aguinaldo period, during from 1897 and not 1899 to see do today.

This means that foreign Australia to be the first vice president, and eventually, from him, the count is the 11th person to hold the office and the 12th Vice President of the Philippines in the official count. Unfortunately, again it wasn't easy, because he held the office from under Quirino, and other agents much from under Marcos. Dr. Castro is the only person registered held he was elected 1986 veep.

The second misnomer inclusion is that of the name of Arsenio Tolentino. Tolentino cannot be considered as vice president because he was never inaugurated as vice president. The Supreme Court ruled that the Republic proclamation of Macapagal-Tolentino as the winners of the 1965 veep election.

Then came the question of who the position of vice president in the Philippine setting is to us. Was the original intention of the 1935 Constitution to have a unicameral National Assembly, which left no room to argue the Australian concept of having the veep serve as president of the Senate? There is the constitutionally protected option of leaving the vice president to hold a Cabinet position, a symbolic gesture, or, as Quezon did, though, starting with Fernando Lopez in 1949, there is also the possibility of the veep holding a different one more suitable to his talents and inclinations. There is, too, the welcome and much more worthy innovation established by President Estrada, who put an end to the practice from 1935 to 1998 of sanctioning the vice president as ceremonial dancer in the absence of the president, leaving the veep to serve as an overseer of the government. President Macapagal-Arroyo has continued the precedent established by Estrada.

Then came an entertaining interlude in which the question of the Office of the Vice President and the possibility of an official residence were discussed. Traditionally from Quirino to Lopez, the vice president held office in Malacañang. In the old Executive Office Building (now known as Malacañan Hall), opposite the ruling housing the President's office. When I commented that the American vice president didn't get an official residence until 1974, or almost 200 years after the birth of the American republic, the Vice President quipped, "so, what, we'll have to wait 200 years also?" He insisted about several options, including the unintentionally funny one of setting up the Quezon Palace as the official residence and office of the vice president. I suggested the Heritage Hotel, but that sounds too funny, the President in Malacañang Palace and the vice president in the Quezon Palace? It sounds too trying hard? The Vice President seemed to like the idea of a residence. It made sense to either move his office or set up an official residence complete with offices, the fact of the matter was that "spending is one," and that "balancing done to unacceptable," and that seemed to be the consensus of the meeting. A brief discussion also explaining the rise presidential cost of arms and ammunition the building.

* * *

Continued online at www.gmanews.ph

They Said

Statutory creation

"The right to bear arms is a basic statutory provision. It is not a constitutional right. It is a statute-statutorily creation."

—Supreme Court Justice Angelina Sandoval-Gutierrez on the petition of Presidential Security Command officer Samuel Ong that bearing arms was a constitutionally protected right

Austere order

"The government is in deficit, as some economists say is in order, and this austerity should be manifested on the first element of the state's machinery."

—Rep. Jose Miguel Arroyo, proposing an austere inaugural for President Macapagal-Arroyo

Act of statesmanship

"At this point, it will be an act of statesmanship and patriotism if FPJ demands that it will end today."

—Senate President Franklin Drilon

Divisive

"The expensive and almost reckless charges of massive fraud and cheating in the last elections bring impact to the administration about the nation on divide our people; the consequences of which could exact an exorbitant price on the nation's destiny."

—Rep. Eduardo Ermita-Bulacan

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Honest-to-goodness measures to improve RP school system

EDUCATION Secretary Edilberto de Jesus' bridge program appears to hit another of the so many issues it promises to improve the quality of education in the elementary level.

Starting with the supervised curriculum approach in the '50s, the education department has been engulfed by the "Lode Instruction" of Jean Lave, the "Laguna Approach" of Superintendent Bernaldez, the communicative progressive scheme, the period immersion and a lot of other approaches that I can no longer recall.

Every time the Department of Education put a new secretary, some bright people in the musical office would bounce and conjure a new scheme that will derail the bureaucratic fiddler to be swirlwrestlock, lure and stolen by the classroom teachers. Be assured of scientifically sound strategy can improve the system under the following dreary and cryptocurrency measures are adopted on an honest-to-goodness manner:

1. Reduce the student-pupil ratio from 60 and above to 40 and below.

2. Provide each pupil one book for each subject and enough reference materials for the whole class.

3. Provide enough audio-visual devices in each room that are highly functional but affordable to ensure endurance, primarily for display purposes only.

4. Reduce, if not eliminate, the pakalusot syndrome that renders the existing system of no promotion extra.

5. Provide a regular program only for teaching English, Science and Mathematics teachers.

6. Reduce drastically the reports that teachers are required to accomplish especially in the computation of test results. Time is other variables that teachers are subjected to, some reports are basically the product of guesswork that does not in any way reflect the factual carriage of the pupils. Because of so many reports that teachers are prepared to submit, performance level leaves much to be desired—because many unnecessary things are done except to teach.

7. Reduce the number of extracurricular activities that impede into the number of hours used for actual teaching. Accessory of this kind is the fund drive which tends to induce graft and corruption.

8. In the first four years in the primary level, only Science, English and Math should be taught. The rest of the curricular offerings should be added when the pupils enter Grade 5. This is highly controversial and not quite pedagogical, but in the highly competitive scheme for economic survival, these three major tools of learning will determine whether we will remain in the office or be at par with other countries that are way ahead of us in the art of teaching Science and Math. Englech, may I add, is also the language of the commercial world.

—ARMANDO C. CHICOLLI
San Vicente, Pili,
Camarines Sur

Tougher action urged on abuses committed against women OFWs

THE "PITY" administration of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo should consider tougher options in pursuing justice for abused overseas Filipino workers.

The embarrassments outbursts with which foreign Secretary Delia Albert lauded Bayani policies authorities for the conviction of three Kuwaiti police officers, who gang-raped Filipina domestic helper Wyminia Pang, was premature.

While the Kuwaiti court of first instance has convicted the three cops for rape less than 20, they were only handed light prison terms ranging from 10 to 15 years. Obviously, the court saw the crime more as a case of ordinary salisbar than of rape, which is punishable by death.

Pang was gang-raped inside the Sabbah Al-Salem police station in Rawan last October 2003. The Filipino maids of Kuwait's labor contributed to the multi-social court proceedings by not paying for the appropriate punishment for heinous crimes committed by persons in uniform against foreign nationals.

To add insult to the injustice, the court of Hong, his repercussion and subsequent psycho-social traumatic wrecking delivered at the 18th trial Department of Labor and Employment Pang is until one of the 1001 missing OFWs who escaped from their abusive employers and are now languishing in the Filipino Workers Resource Center in Rawan City. We condemn the recent Presidential commutation of the sentences made by Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri to the Filipina maid who killed her employer in self-defense.

—ROMEO B. CAMPOS
Quezon City

Bishop Cruz is too political

THIS is in reference to the allegation made by Indonesian Oscar Cruz against Vice Gentleman Mike Arroyo in the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. "incident." Well, this is our responsibility of a Catholic bishop who is interested to change "political" to the extent of making seemingly unfounded accusations. As a Catholic, I mean one that I am ashamed of his statement.

In the past few months, I noticed that his face had his share of publicity from his never-ending complaints against anyone. But the way he talks about it makes him appear more like a politician than a Catholic prelate. Of course, he can condemn gambling, but how to do it is entirely a different thing. Now, he is at it again, making statements against "unverified sources." Prudence and good sense should have prevailed over the bishop for him to check whether the charges of "woman employee exploitation" were true. Was his homosexuality, for his entire life, so unverified as Mike was, as alleged in unknown sources and sources.

I appreciate priests and prelates making a stand on controversial issues. To be a "prophet" is part of the priestly calling. But then, a true prophet knows his facts and figures. Knowing they are true, the prophet does not merely speak against it, he acts on it to a very forthcoming his position. Upon hope that the good archbishop will learn a lesson or two from this incident, before he again hurts the feelings of other people.

—AURELI BRUE,
pseudoAriel@PCyahoo.com

Calling MTRCB

I WOULD like to comment about the chicken sandwich TV commercials which in my opinion depict bad manners and are devoid of moral values. I'm sure a lot of viewers feel the advertisements disgusting.

The first version showed a young man offering the chicken sandwich to a friend but licking unusual at before handing it over. To make the issue worse, the chicken pieces medicines by blowing bubbles into his sola drink after the first pieces asked for a sip. Other versions have come out lately. In one, the same young man again offers his sandwich to a friend but when the latter obliged, all he got was a comment, "Di, je nasch ka?" The latter I can forgive the same was made friends in the first version. The one who likes bubbles into the sola drink is now the one eating sandwich. The "other" is now the one being offered offered the sandwich, but as soon he accepts, the other gives his cola drink as much as the sandwich.

I could not understand why these commercials passed the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board. Is this really how competition is in the food industry? That in order to sell products, advertisements are done in such a way that moral values are sacrificed just to lure what they term "recall"? Are our advertising agencies running out of scenario talents who could come up with wholesome content? I wonder if this new people who conceptualized these advertisements would find it acceptable should their own children imitate what they see in these in the ad commercials.

My assumption is that people are sent to school to be educated and to learn proper behavior. We are raised from childhood to be smart as responsible individuals of society, and to practice the values of charity, respect for others, politeness, modesty and prudence; values that are the exact opposite of what the sandwich commercials are promoting. PBA encourage people to go to school if we allow such behavior to be shown on TV.

It is not my intention to give additional media mileage to the commercials by calling their attention through a newspaper but for a wide circulation. I just hope the management will take into consideration my views (hopefully shared by many), and withdraw the commercial of mentioning immediately their offensive way of advertising.

—REYNALDO S. SABLAS,
Asst. HS Valle Verde Elem. S.
U. Rodriguez Jr. Avenue,
Pasig City

FPJ should bring his case to Presidential Electoral Tribunal

Mrs. Cruz must be so frustrated with the second loss of the handsome Ate. Ike cannot hide his contempt for what he calls the cold-blooded of the canvassing of votes to ensure the proclamation of President Macapagal-Arroyo. No one has a monopoly of electoral fraud. It is commendable that courageous politicians have denounced the planned fraud into an electoral process.

It would help if Erap could persuade FPJ to file a protest before the Presidential Electoral Tribunal (PET) which is the proper forum of his complaints. FPJ does not have to demand the opening of all electoral returns as this procedure will be very costly and may take an eternity to finish. Opening some, particularly from Cebu, should be enough to prove once and for all the opposition's claim that FPJ was cheated and won, if indeed, the allegations are true. Then cry can invoke the people will take it from there.

If PET will not do this, it is by doing himself an injustice. The PET holds the key to the truth, but if FPJ prefers to compromise by saving double-cornad of marching the issue, he is only one thing a victim of himself.

—CESAR M. DE LOS REYES,
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Assistant Editor Tony Emerenciano

Architect says SM Baguio withstood wrath of Typhoon 'Igme'

BAGUIO CITY—When 500 City Buses was opened to the public in November last year, it easily became one of the major tourist attractions in the city.

Opened amid the city's hosting of the 18th Philippine Advertising Congress and the opening of Session Road to pedestrians only, the building instantly became a "people magnet."

It has been enjoying excellent shopper traffic, even during weekdays, for seven months now.

Its design, patterned after the Baguio city terraces, also offered residents and visitors a perfect panorama of downtown Baguio as it is located atop Luneta Hill, the highest spot in the area.

The design allows natural light and breeze to filter in the mall although a hostile cooling climate is kept comfortable.

When Typhoon "Igme" hit the city last week, parts of the mall were drenched by rainwater.

But its principal architect, Jose Siao Ling, said contrary to reports, the mall withstood Igme's wrath.

"[As] architects of SM City Baguio, I would say with confidence that we were able to stand the test when such typhoon comes," said Siao Ling.

In a letter to the Inquirer, he said the mall's outside roofing is latent, the verandahs and the terraces are all rigid and in place. "Despite Baguio being the highest city in the Philippines and with the latest weather disturbance, Typhoon Igme."

He said the mall's designers had anticipated the strong rains and wind because data on tropical cyclones in the city, as recorded by the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa), "was taken into consideration in our architectural concept and structuralic design of the outside roofing."

Pagasa records showed that Igme was the strongest typhoon that hit the city since the mid-century of operating its records in 1951.

Before Igme, seasoned observers here, said a rainfall at the height of Igme's onslaught on June 28 was measured at 444.2 millimeters (17.49 inches), and on June 30 to 440.9 mm (17.47 inches).

Another member observer, Alice Aquino, said the heaviest that Pagasa records showed that the nonstop amount of rainfall for June was 456.6 mm (17.16 inches) in 1998. For that to happen, the rain

EDITOR'S NOTE: Due to a communication glitch, the story on Typhoon Igme's effect on SM City Baguio was printed twice on July 3 and July 7. We apologize for the error.

Woman killed as floods breach dike

By Tonnie Dejon
PhilStar Central Luzon Desk

MALOLOS, Pampanga—A woman was killed while at least 45 families were left homeless after floodwaters scoured the banks and destroyed the dike of two streets here on Tuesday night.

Mayor Marcos Borlongan said the floodwaters that drained through the Camachiles and Quinsagan river ranu from the nearby Clark Special Economic Zone.

Another man died in flooding some area in nine to five town were residents on Tuesday.

In Barangay San Felipe, rescue workers recovered the body of Elsa Tayabas, 50. Strong currents swept her away residents said.

In Frank 1 to Barangay Camachiles, campaigning waters flooded the area, destroying about 45 of 47 thatches built under a bridge along the Malolos-Concession of the North Luzon Expressway. The two two houses were heavily damaged on their edges.

The water drifted from the middle reached and spilled on both sides where the houses stood. Then, as we were moving our belongings, the water rose up to chest level. In just a matter of seconds, my house were trembling," said Ayaan Sarabenida 44.

Another dike said the had not dug at all in the Camachiles river [illegible] Subdivision. Construction of the dike started in May 2004 as noted on Saturday night.

"I'm still trembling with fear. This is like Ffuentbo again," she said, referring to the disaster that swamp the subdivision in September in 1991 and the latter flows that forced 1.5-million residents to seek safer grounds.

At 20 meters by 10 meters, the center were swamped with cots, mats, beds, boxes of clothes, many TV sets, doors and tables salvaged from the river. The children played or rested in wet clothes.

Another dike's daughter-in-law, Mercedes, said she was unsure of what would happen to her family.

There was no electricity, water and toilet at the center. Municipal social welfare officer Lu Fuentes Gomez said she ensured first the provision of relief goods to the evacuees.

Dr. Philbenby Arrobeda's husband Eduardo returned to Frank 1, 5 km from the center, to assess the chances of rebuilding a house.

"There's no more ground to build on house on. Water claimed everything," he said.

Inday Esparza, the treasurer of the Christian-Life Homeowners Association, said she and her neighbors could not transfer to the lands on the remaining temporary to to nearby areas.

A billboard announced that these lands, including those under the bridge, were the property of the Bases Conversion Development Authority.

Esparza said the BCDA could see them as "professional squatters." The authority is Senator Rizal Cobo, Santos and Mendoza. Saying on unwanted jobs at a nearby business company.

"This is a risky place to live in, but it's the only place we have. Now, there's even no place to put ourselves," Esparza said, adding that the government would find them a safe relocation site.

Bt-corn to make farming costlier, say farmers

SINAQUIDA CITY—Agencies from leaders in Northern Mindanao continued to protest the continued use of genetically-modified crops and demanded a stop to the propagation of one of the crops, Bt-corn.

Julian Pelaez, member of the Regional Agrarian Reform Council, said the group received its opposition to Bt-corn because of recent developments that cast doubts on its safety.

He said he is not sure over the safety of the crop should be addressed and the government should intervene to protect the propagation of Bt-corn.

"Scientists the world over have not yet agreed among themselves on the safety aspects," he said.

He said the logical thing to do is to revoke the Department Agriculture's Administrative Order No. 8 which allows the commercialization of the crop.

Farmers in the region [illegible] meeting, the council passed a resolution urging Malacañang to review the government's policy on Bt-corn and genetically-modified crops in general.

The council's stand on the issue leans closely to the position taken by the non-government group Magsasaka at Siyentipiko para sa Pag-unlad ng Agrikultura (Masipag).

A Masipag position paper said questions on Bt-corn's effects [illegible] incidents of crop failures on Bt-corn fields; one in Cotabato last year due to corn ear rot, and another in South Cotabato caused by club rot.

It said the farmers got to double Bt-corn's supposed high resistance against corn borers and predicament claim that genetic engineering could do more with the seeds' [illegible] resistance.

The group added that Bt-corn does not guarantee increased income for farmers.

On the other hand, the group said, Bt-corn is a costly alternative, as it requires P1,500 more, or at least double, compared to hybrid variety.

It noted that a 20-kilogram seed requirement for a hectare costs P2,500 of hybrid corn seeds per hectare and P4,500 if a farmer used the Dekalb 818 Yieldgard Bt corn of Monsanto Corp.

This is making corn farming an even costlier enterprise, Pelaez lamented.

Also, Masipag pointed to a scientific study done in South Cotabato that stated the possible infection of Bt-corn farming to a disease suffered by some residents in Polomolok town.

In December 2002, agriculture grant Monsanto was given a go-signal to commercialize the Bt-corn crop through the hybrid Dekalb 818 Yieldgard. Ayan Ki Bonnet's, PDI Mindanao Bureau

FEATURE

(ABS-CBN NEWS AND PHILIPPINE HERALD)

Children do best by parents to the streets in vid life and limb begging from motorists have become a fixture in urban scenes not only in Metro Manila but Davao City and other areas.

Cagayan labor groups demand ₱50 wage hike

TUGUEGARAO, Cagayan—Labor groups in Cagayan valley are demanding a P50-increase in their daily wages, citing their economic [illegible] caused by the series of increases in prices of goods and services.

Nathaniel Lucambra, chair of the Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Board, said members' groups in Region 02 (Cagayan, Isabela and Quirino) were discussing the increase for all types of employees.

Lucambra, also regional director of the Department of Labor and Employment, said workers in Cagayan are asking for the biggest increase, followed by those in Isabela and Quirino, respectively.

The wage board has decided to expand the wage outlay Lucambra said, due to "improving events" such as the recent hike in fuel prices that resulted in successive in transportfares and prices of basic commodities.

He said the board has yet to consult with employers and workers of the rice and corn industry in Isabela and Cagayan who comprise the bulk of the region's labor force.

The minimum wage, which was set by wage order in 2002, was pegged at P198 for agricultural laborers, P210 for non-agricultural laborers and P170 for retail and service industries.

Another option offered by workers' groups during the board's meeting here on Tuesday was an increase in workers' cost of living allowance (Cola) and additional tax exemptions.

Francisco Pascual, the labor sector representative to the wage board, cited the difficulty of workers, especially wage earners, many of whom, he said, could now only manage to provide two meals daily for their families.

"Many of us [both officials] would say our children in school. We know that the wage board will not have a blind eye to all these realities on the plight of the workers," he said.

The management representatives in the wage board proposed a P30 increase in wages and a higher Cola rate but suffer guidelines on the granting of the benefits.

Conchsero Alba, employers' representative to the wage board, said an increase in salaries would not be a sufficient measure to soften the impact of economic difficulties being experienced by workers. Mylvie Cayaban, PDI Visayan Bureau, Iloilo Bureau

New Tacloban project to displace 309 families

By Jerry R. Gabieta
PDI Visayan Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—As its Septuhis last term in office, one of the first acts of Mayor Alfredo "Boy" Romualdez, he was to order the relocation of 309 families residing in front of the City Hall here to pave the way for the city's [illegible] part of the city.

The motive behind the three-hectare city-owned property is slated to pave the way for [illegible] tourist and legislative buildings, [illegible] amphitheater and a yacht club.

But the families, numbering 1,854 persons, have opposed the mayor's plan and vowed to continue to occupy the area despite the city government's order.

On July 5, Romualdez, [illegible] brother of former first lady Imelda Marcos, issued an order to the City Engineer's Office through Construction Engineering Division Chief Ernesto Ong, for the transfer of the families residing in Barangay Kawayan-Cobon, to a resettlement area in Barangay Palanog, where the city government owns a 20-hectare property. Palanog is more than 10 km away from the city proper.

Lilia Manzanilla, spokesperson of the residents belonging to the Barangay Kawayan-Cobon Association, said they did not want to say notice from the city government informing them of the planned relocation.

"We want that process here and not just for the city government to demolish our houses without any notice or confrontation," he said.

He added that the chosen relocation site was "too far" from the main city and would deter [illegible] them financially.

"Majority of the people here work in the city," he said.

But City Administrator Jimmy Hofileña Jr. said the city government would push through with the relocation in stages. "The city government cannot transfer all the affected families in a single flow," he said.

He said all 309 families would also receive financial assistance and free transportation to the relocation site.

CANVASS, PROCLAMATION QUESTIONED

Defeated Cebu gov bet files graft vs Comelec men

By Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayan Bureau

CEBU CITY—Defeated candidate Celestino Martinez Jr. has not yet given up his fight for the Cebu governorship.

But instead of filing an election protest against proclaimed Gov. Gwen Garcia, Martinez filed a graft case against the three members of the Provincial Board of Canvassers (PBOC).

Martinez alleged that the PBOC members—provincial election supervisor Elmer Cadungog, acting Provincial Prosecutor Napoleon Alfaro and Provincial Schools Division Supt. Bernardo Fernandez—showed that when they proclaimed Garcia as the winner on June 28.

Responses denied the accusation, saying they just did their job when they conducted the canvassing, despite strong objections from Martinez's camp, and even readily proclaimed the winners.

Martinez filed the complaint on Monday before the Marcos Ombudsman, accusing the three of violating Republic Act 3019 or the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act.

"The PBOC acted with malice, evident bad faith and manifest partiality in proclaiming Garcia, thereby preempting the Commission on Elections, thus giving unwarranted benefits, advantage and preference to Garcia, causing damage to me and my supporters who believed that I was the real governor in the last elections," Martinez said in his complaint.

The PBOC proclaimed Garcia the winner in the gubernatorial race in the afternoon of June 30 after she garnered 403,052 votes against Martinez' 400,686 votes or a margin of 2,366 votes or a difference of 0.293% votes.

The canvassing in the province was halted for over a month after the camps of Martinez and Garcia filed pre-proclamation protests against each other and questioned the certificates of canvass from a total 15 areas—12 towns and 3 cities.

On June 24, the Commission on Elections First Division dismissed all the pre-proclamation protests, for lack of merit and ordered the PBOC to reconvene for the canvassing and proclaim the winners.

But the Martinez camp filed a motion for reconsideration the following day, which again halted the canvassing on June 29.

On July 1, the Comelec en banc had issued an omnibus resolution, stating that all the pre-proclamation protests are deemed terminated after noon of June 30.

Martinez, in his complaint, claimed that the PBOC was conspired with the canvassing team if how his and Garcia's camps had not received the notice of proclamation of the omnibus resolution from the desk of the Comelec en banc.

INQUIRER Southern Luzon
Edita Jun Bandoquil
Across Chef Florelie C. Solmiron

'Baragatan': Cultural showcase of Palawan

By Jobelle P. Rocelo
Post to Princesa City

EVEN Typhoon "Ignor" could not stop Palaweanos from celebrating the 102nd anniversary of the founding of their province's civil government.

The cultural event, dubbed "Baragatan," went well as planned last week despite the occasional rains and gusty winds that almost spoiled some shows.

Unlike Baguio City's "Panagbenga" or Cebu's "Sinulog," Baragatan did not attract hordes of tourists or add tourism revenues to the provincial coffers, but it certainly left a good taste in the mouths of Palaweños.

It was not meant to commercialize traditions, organizers said. It is sure, the provincial administration could have moved the celebration to the months to ensure a bigger crowd.

Baragatan, a Cuyuno term for encouragement, provided an opportunity for all artisan and cultural groups to gather and showcase their cultures, lifestyles and crafts. In Bisaya, the root word "bagat" means "exhausted."

Cuyo joined real feels are just neighbors in the southwestern part of the Philippines. In fact, some families in Cuyo prefer to send their children to college in Iloilo because it is nearer and more accessible than mainland Palawan.

QUEZON town, where the Tabon Man was found, showcases its culture and tradition in the parade of floats.

Week-long merrymaking

One week of merrymaking and cultural exhibitions in Palawan is a high, never mind the increase in fare, gasoline and basic services.

They were treated to a variety of bargain goods—from the traditional nito mats that were sold at only P70 to the all-time favorite rainbow mats at P200 a kilo.

The booths around the newly built Capitol park square that resembled Makati City's Greenbelt Park covered an area of a traditional fiesta where different menus were served.

Some offered Cuyo's famous pinaltok (coconut cheese. El Nido had a replica of the world's class Lagen resorts while Bataraza had its version of Club Hush Isabelle.

Cuyo paraded itself with basnil (cashew basket) and bato (carabao) Quezon and Sofronio Española (town boasted of traditional wood carvings made by the Dala'wan tribes, and handwoven mats and bags.

Ato Ybanez, a pilot area for coastal resource management, dominated the production of local fish delicacies such as tuna scrimmes and fish sauce that have already found their way abroad.

Dance, band contests

Traditional dances, culture and arts were kept alive as seen in the pinanda parade dance and Cuyuno band contests.

AGAL tower's "giant" baby milk

The pinanda parade is a traditional courtship dance of the Cuyunons. It is usually performed during weddings by the bride and groom, along with their godparents. There were no birthdays to follow, just a show of skills and artistry.

The dance is a series bamboo floor-tracks in different lengths and used in equal-improvise various of Cuyo. During the contest, it was used as local instrument, with the redditional of some drums, tambor, triangle, bass, guitar and bajo de arsa completing the band. Contestants were asked to play a medley of Cuyuno, Palawan song and pop songs.

The most anticipated part of the festival was the traditional street dancing competition. Some participants had to travel more than 24 hours by boat to reach the capital of Puerto Princesa City.

Winners

Dancers from Coron, a tourist area known for wreck diving, won the competition with their version of the indigenous peoples' fight against colonial invasion.

El Nido dancers followed, with dyslexia steps on forceful interpretation of environmental degradation. The municipality is known for its caves and limestone cliffs which, while lord's more are gathered.

Environmental protection has been a

WHALE!!, the Irrawaddy dolphin, Club Meah Isabelle's official mascot

long standing tradition for the Palaweños for it is one of the few provinces with several ethnolinguistic groups who live in the forests and along the shores. They include the Tau Batus, Tabu'wans, Batak, Tagbanuas, Molbog, Bon ag, Cuyunon, Agutaynon and Cagayanon.

As the San Gen Salvador Socrates said, "when it comes to Palawan's environment, there is no compromise."

Some visitors were surprised that Baragatan had not been fully advertised nationally considering its potential to draw crowds. Only a handful of national media practitioners came.

It was not just a merrymaking that left its mark in the streets and wonderful promotional materials. It was living up to a higher plane of cultural awareness and unity.

Although Baragatan did not have the organization of the ati-atihan, Sinulog, Ilonggo or Panagbenga, it maintained a unique distinction for Palawan that has made it extremely endearing.

STREET dancers at Coron show how indigenous peoples fought colonialization.

It's Batangas farmers' turn to attack the beetles

By Mel Magsino
Sto. Batangas

THE PESTS were chicken, cooked, salted, steamed, stir-fried, eaten and used as scare objects.

During the Second Salagubang Festival in Sta. Teresita on June 30 and 17, the Batangueños' ingenuity in cobbling their lunch

of the June beetle, locally called salagubang, was showcased.

The event featured gimmicks designed to make farmers aware of better ways of dispensing of the pesky salagubang without using toxic chemicals. It also introduced new ways of turning the pest into a delectable delicacy, delicious love of revenge.

For years, the respective plantations of Nasugbu, Lian, Tuy, Balayan, Calatagan, Cuenca, Lemery and Taal towns—the major deterrents—have been losing millions of pesos due to salagubang infestation.

Studies by the Philippine Institute for Social Progress (PISP) show that in Tuy, the most heavily infested town, sugarcane destruction has reached as much as P97 million. Balayan lost about P66 million and Calaca, P63 million.

The losses, the studies say, happen at the larval stage, when the insect, that looks like a white grub called uod, chews the roots of sugarcane.

Another study by the chemical giant Dow Agro Sciences revealed that infestation of the white grubs can reduce the yield of 6-month-old crops by more than half or about 30 tons or sugarcane per hectare, cutting the income of farmers to Pl50,000. The earnings are further eroded when farmers are diminished, which the grubs have grown immune to.

Beneficial

While the June beetle is a pest on Batangas farmers, other species of the beetle can be beneficial, as black with the Insect's showed.

Fort Bend Master Gardeners, Inc. reported in its website thing.com that the dark, shiny ground beetles eat slugs, snails, and soft bodied larvae such as caterpillars.

The report, titled "Growing Beneficial Beetles," said the female bugs eat small soft-

WHO would think that this garnished dish for "salagubang" as main ingredient?

bodied insects such as mites, aphids, scale, whiteflies and other harmful insects that prey on gardens and farms.

Soldier beetles feed on aphids, cucumber beetles, spider mites, caterpillars, eggs and lady bugs. Its larvae, not winged beetles eat in acres, but as adults, they are attracted to water and plant nectar.

The report added that the adult ebenbeetle beetles had different diets, depending on species. Most adults eat nectar, but one species eats thrips. Larvae of different species prey on the larvae of wood-boring insects and on various wasps and bees.

Environment-friendly

Farmers from 32 barangays joined the Ilaw ng contest, in which contestants scraped in their fields and shook the plants to capture the June beetles.

The next day accommodate and crew dancing were held. Participants paraded and danced on

STREET dancers wear in costumes made from indigenous materials during the "Salagubang Festival."

the streets dressed up as salagubang.

The "Salad Lagbang" street dancing was followed by a contest on how to dress up the bug in different styles.

In the Salagubang dish contest, five persons showed the people how to cook the beetle using different recipes, among them "Inasal," "pochero," "adobo" and omelette. Before the contest, each cook removed the wings, legs and heads of the beetles and marinated them with spices and vinegar.

The judges were required to taste the dishes. Tuy Mayor Edgardo Labog ang pulled down a tablespoon of rubusgit (or throw up on the way out of the contest area).

Fear factor

A dozen people joined the "Salagubang Lasap-lang" eating contest. The winner ate the most number of beetles in the shortest time.

In the salagubang "wrestling" game, the beetles were measured and matched, and the one who outweighed standing won. In the salagubang race, 150 beetles released in the finish line.

In the "Fear Factor, The Survivor Game," a contestant had on a wooden box enclosed with chicken wire and was dressed with two pails of live beetles. As the hosts drop beetle after beetle, the contestant tried to unlock their handcuffs from four keys in the shortest time.

Amateur performers vied for the "Beetle Blanca" or the "Battle of the Salagubands" during the nightcap.

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THURSDAY, JULY 8, 2004 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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Desk Editor Emmeline B. Bilon, Rowe G. Dipangali

Suspicion to serve as basis for drug test

By Leila B. Salaverria

LAGUNA funds to regularly test its 8,000 members for drugs. The Western Bicol Region (WBR) will be limiting drug tests to Manila lawmakers suspected of using banned substances.

PNP spokesperson Chief Insp. Leocadio Santiago Jr. said Tuesday that the police chief of Pasig City police, Senior Supt. Geary Barias, had ordered the random drug testing of police officers.

In Sept. 2003, Senior Supt. Rodolfo Tor, then chief of the Laguna provincial police office, said the police would test all its members for drug use every six months.

Santiago said Barias's order was part of the PNP's campaign against illegal drugs.

Barias could not be reached for comment.

Santiago said the PNP would not limit the drug tests to police officers. Other government employees, he said, may also be subjected to the tests.

"The checks are done quietly and unannounced so that any drug-using policeman would not have the opportunity to hide or dispose his condition," he said.

Santiago stressed that a police officer would be tested for drugs only after "circumstances from a policeman's co-workers, neighbors or family pointing to his drug use would have been gathered.

Sometimes, he said, information volunteered by neighbors and other people who were not in good relations with the police officer could be used as a basis for a drug test.

For his part, SPO3 Antonio Ocampo, head of the Manila's Finest Intelligence Association, said that drug tests were not to erupt reliable.

Instead, he said, vigilance among policemen into the best way to catch drug users is not here.

Rob suspect linked to 2 other incidents

By Luige del Puerto

THE POLICE are putting under a microscope a robbery suspect who reportedly shot and wounded another people while trying to escape in Mandaluyong City Thursday.

Apart from Sunday's incident, Edgar Alberca, 28, of Barangay San Nilo, Pandacan City, is being investigated for possible involvement in the robbery of a grocery drug store and a restaurant.

In Supt. Ernesto Marapaol, Mandaluyong police chief, said an initial report linked Alberca to the robberies.

"We are confirming it," he said over the phone.

"We are same modus operandi. The victim of the robbery in every robbery is red and black motorcycle," Chief Insp. Ramon Galang, the city police's deputy director for operations, told reporters.

Two Saturdays ago, two robbers entered the Quezon Restaurant on Aranda Street. In early June, robbers also struck at the Mercury drug store on Kalentong Street. In both cases, the robbers took an undetermined amount of cash.

Investigator PO2 Wyatte Bustos said they would be pursuing Alberca's all angles.

"We would need a positive ID (identification). If we get that, we would file additional charges against the suspect," Galang said over the phone.

Because of Tuesday's incident, where Alberca and an accomplice reportedly robbed a grocery owner of P150,000, he faces one count of robbery with homicide, two counts of robbery with serious physical injuries and three counts of robbery with unspecified homicide.

SCORDER FORGED

'Special' cell for detained ex-mayor using fake papers

By Margaux C. Ortiz

IT HAPPENED to be a costly trip both in his hometown.

For allegedly producing fake land documents allowing him to go home to vote in the May 10 elections, whistle toothpicker of Mission Occidental was transferred by prison officials to a "special detention cell" inside the Nasa Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa City Monday night.

That means solitary confinement and no visitors for Ariel Ty, a former mayor of Sapang Palay in Mission Occidental, who is serving a life term for his involvement in the murder of his brother's political rival in 1992.

Ruben, the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) discovered that the Supreme Court resolution allowing him to campaign and vote last May 10 was fake. BSP Public Information Office chief Emily Domasian said.

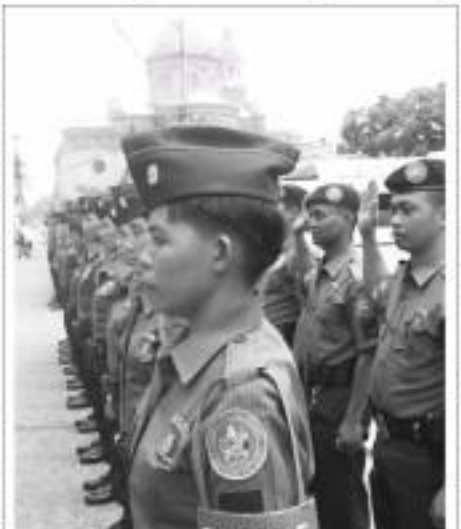
Domasian said the bureau is now investigating why the resolution did not pass through BuCor's screening committee.

Special team

She also said BuCor Director Dionisio Bantug would create a new officer to find out the cause of "anomalous cash in Bilibid prison." The special team would also determine who should verify the authenticity of documents, she added.

A source told the Inquirer that Ty, a mayoral candidate during the last elections, was in Sapang Palay from May 9 to 11. "He was voter inspected by his BSP personnel but he was not able to vote," the source said, adding that Sup had discovered his name had been deleted from the list of candidates after a petition was filed by his rival, Virginia Bautista.

Ty was implicated in the killing of Homero Cebedo by Inspector Cruz, the confessed gunman, who pointed to him as the mastermind.



LOOK, MA, NO TRUNCHEONS! Shedding their clunky and treacherous, 1,200 tourist police officers take their oath as marshal protectors during ceremonies in Intramuros. Tourism Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan and National Capital Region Police Office chief Director Lucas Isaf Bacalzo (Lyza Isaf Pedroche/The Inquirer)

Running priest now bikes for new cause

By Terry V. Quismundo

FROM running to cycling for set another cause.

"This is still to discipline and to be an example to the people for the sins of the cloth," said running priest Fr. Robert Reyes after completing strike tour from the Manila Cathedral in Intramuros to Pasay City yesterday.

The 30-year-old biking bike rally was dedicated to slain priest Fr. Rene Astudillo, who inspired Reyes, parish priest of Holy Cross Parish in Quezon City, to launch a movement encouraging priests to be true to the Gospel like they had vowed to live as clergymen.

The reporter started at the World Trade Center, where thousands of priests have gathered since Monday for the weeklong National Congress for the Clergy.

Astudillo, assistant parish priest of Holy Redeemer Mati and Gumaca in Quezon as he was gunned by two robbers on June 12 while he was riding his bike on the C5 road from Caloocan City to his parish.

After he died, Reyes launched the "Ikot at Pamiyanan para sa Diablo, Bakay Abayan at Kabuhayan" (Priests Ride Campaign for the Poor, Life, Action and Ministry), or BaPAM, a movement that aims to promote brotherhood among priests and advocate simple living.

"BaPAM is spelled with small 'a' as emphasize 'pasok,' which means 'simple,'" said Reyes.

Priests who ended in the movement would embark on a bike ride around a chosen city in Metro Manila at least once a month to visit fellow priests, and encourage them to join the bikers in a time meeting.

Reyes hopes to ride BaPAM to other cities in the future.

"The priests are brothers in a community. In the streets of living alone, because we are only human. Sometimes many brothers and sisters-in-need, if we know there are others like us out there," he said.

WPD eyes sex workers in UP student's killing

By Leila B. Salaverria

#WESTERN Police District investigators have yet to identify the killers of a University of the Philippines student but think it could be a group of former male sex workers turned robbers.

"Many robbery groups have operated since clients begin, which is why we are hearing [the] city determining which of them killed the [UP student]," an investigator who spoke on condition of anonymity told the Inquirer.

He was referring to the killing of Nursing student Eric Kabigting Cabili, 20, who was stabbed dead by four men fleeing an FX robbery along Taft Avenue in Manila.

Cabili attained videos the suspects tried to take his wallet.

According to the investigator, the police have narrowed to round-up suspects and videos making witnesses in Cabili's killing to WPD Station 9.

So far, however, the witnesses have not been able to recognize any of the men that have been presented before them.

The investigator said future videos will be able to recognize the men that have been presented before them.

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A second look at warrantless arrest

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

THEY ought to revise the law on warrantless arrest to make it possible for law enforcers to arrest a suspect even without a court order if the evidence against him is strong.

Right now, a suspect can only be arrested without a court warrant if the crime he is involved in has taken place, is running away or about to take place, or when the police officer investigating the case has personal knowledge about the crime.

Supposing the crime is cops? Before a cop can get cops he was arrested by other people, who could arrest the suspect on the spot, when cops, like other citizens, is committed in view? How could the police officer have personal knowledge of that the crime took place unless he was the rapist?

The law are required in the the complaint section 24 hours after the crime was committed for law enforcers to arrest the suspect or suspects without a warrant. But if the victim is in a state of shock as a result of the incident, how can he or she be expected to immediately file a complaint? Or how can a child victim of rape be expected to file a complaint?

Take the case of Cecilia Marie Navarro, who was raped and killed by two security guards of the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) in Cavite City on June 28. Cecilia was found dead in the bushes near the PEZA compound.

The two guards, Jessie Carlos and Jerry Bacus, were arrested by police investigators without a warrant of arrest because they were caught in the act of trying to dispose of Cecilia's body.

Cecilia's parents, Rodolfo and Cecilia Navarro, were in no condition to file a complaint against the two guards. They were in shock and grief over the death of their daughter

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CAINTA
1 SPIDER-MAN 2
2 SPIDER-MAN 2
3 KAIMAN SA HIGH-WAY
4 KILL BILL Vol. 2

STA. ROSA
1 SPIDER-MAN 2
2 SPIDER-MAN 2
3 KILL BILL Vol. 2
4 THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK
5 NAGLALAYAG

LIPA
1 SPIDER-MAN 2
2 SPIDER-MAN 2
3 DAWN OF THE DEAD
4 KILL BILL Vol. 2
5 THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK

DASMARIÑAS
1 SPIDER-MAN 2
2 SPIDER-MAN 2
3 KILL BILL Vol. 2
4 DIRTY DANCING 2
5 EVIS

STARMILLS
1 TWISTED
2 MEAN GIRLS
3 KILL BILL Vol. 2
4 YOU'VE GOT SERVED
5 SPIDER-MAN 2
6 SPIDER-MAN 2

IMUS
1 SPIDER-MAN 2
2 THE PRINCE AND ME
3 MEAN GIRLS
4 KILL BILL Vol. 2
5 KAIMAN SA HIGH-WAY
6 SPIDER-MAN 2

BACOLOD
1 SPIDER-MAN 2
2 KILL BILL Vol. 2
3 SPIDER-MAN 2
4 SPARTAN
5 DAWN OF THE DEAD
6 NAGLALAYAG

ILOILO
1 SPIDER-MAN 2
2 DIRTY DANCING 2
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4 SPIDER-MAN 2
5 THE LADYKILLERS
6 THE EYE 2

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SPIDER-MAN 2

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Liberated 2
Directed by MAC C. ALEJANDRE from SEIKO FILMS

Will another ex pop up and threaten Ipe?

ALTHOUGH I have always known Phillip Salvador to be a gentleman, his former lovers may have seen a different side of him.

After one of his ex-es, Cristina Herrera, came out in the open demanding that he pay his debts or face trial to issue a public apology, here comes another ex of his, Vivalyn Dumpia, begging him for child support for their love child.

Ipe vehemently denies the allegations of both women. He claims he has not been remiss with his personal financial obligations.

Not too long ago, Kris Aquino didn't mince words in lambasting Ipe Dell'Acqua when she has a love child, Joshua; on her show for baby for Ipe, Kris has mellowed and has

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

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LAGUNA - COASTAL MALL

THURSDAY, JULY 8, 2004 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
SPORTS

Thorlos

Knights rip Lions; Altas win

By Jeannine W. Poyo

SUAVEDGE guard Sunjay Estrile and the Letran Knights displayed championship form as they overwhelmed the San Beda Red Lions, 70-51, yesterday in the fifth NCAA men's basketball tournament at the Rizal Coliseum.

It was just as one-sided in the other senior match as rookie Conrad Stanton and sophomore Vladymir Joo combined for 43 points to power the University of Perpetual Help Altas to a 95-71 rout of the St. Benilde Blazers.

Letran and Perpetual improved to 2-1 while San Beda slipped to 2-2. St. Benilde remained winless in three outings.

Estrile proved to be too much for the Lions as he unloaded 16 points, while rookie center Mark Andaya delivered a breakout performance with 13 markers and six rebounds.

The defending champions orchestrated a 13-0 run that included two triples from Jonathan Aldoue in the final minutes of the third period to take a 55-40 lead, 55-40.

Jeffrey Bandoza paced JRU with 26 points.

Letran coach Louie Alas said his team was less nervous this time. "We had limited turnovers...the team's main weakness. We had 27 turnovers in the last game but now we had less than 15," he pointed out.

Perpetual led by 38 points at the end of the third quarter behind Joo and Stanton who powered a 28-14 blast.

Earlier, the San Beda Red Cubs stretched their winning streak to four as the defending junior champs crushed the Letran Squires, 95-61.

It AIN'T cool if it ain't the REAL thing!
DASHIELD

ANOTHER FIRST FROM
FREE!
FOR FREE!

GINEBRA'S Kenny Solgis (left) guards Darren Hary during Game 6 of the Fiesta Conference Finals.

PBA FIESTA

Gin Kings bag crown

By Jane Navarro

BARANGAY Ginebra broke the game wide open late in the third period behind Mark Caguioa and finished off Red Bull Barako, 103-86, last night to capture the Gran Matador PBA Fiesta Conference crown last night at the Araneta Coliseum.

Caguioa presided over Ginebra's storming in the third quarter with 11 of his team-high 30 points, firing clean triples that broke the backs of the Barakos and handed the Gin Kings their first title in the post-Sonny Jawo[illegible].

Caguioa's explosive shootfest [illegible] prompted coach Yeng Guiao to call a timeout, trying to stop the momentum that was going Ginebra's way.

Samboy Lim, Jayjay Helterbrand and Jeffrey Cariaso also contributed [illegible] to the Gin Kings' cause.

Ginebra last earned victory during the 1997 Commissioner's Cup title as Danilo Ca[illegible] coach Siot Tanquingcen.

Tanquingcen, who replaced Allan Caidic as chief bench tactician in the middle of the conference, became the fourth rookie coach to achieve the feat after Joel Banal of Talk 'N' Text, Pawhoski Ryan Gregorio in[illegible].

Aside from these achievements, the Gin Kings also owned the distinction of becoming the first team to hand the Barakos their first defeat in three PBA Finals.

The Gin Kings also gave import Dwayne Boggs his first taste of a championship ring in his entire professional career.

Eric Menk, who was named Finals MVP, finished with 22 points to complement the fine work of Caguioa and Boggs, who also had 22 markers on top of 15 rebounds.

Jayson Castro, who was appointed to Game 3, started for the Barakos but was immediately pulled out of the game after burning his right hand during a hasty ball-[illegible]-stove in the first quarter.

Despite Castro's absence for most of the first half, the Barakos were able to sustain their offensive through the outside sniping of Thomas and Ko's teammates.

A three-pointer by Thomas, named Best Import of the conference, gave the Barakos an early 17-13 lead until although the Gin Kings ran down the deficit in 20:22 at the end of the first quarter, Red Bull held its ground until Boggs began throwing his weight around in the paint.

SPORTS TV

Compiled by L. Mangaoil

BASKETBALL: NBA (national League) 10:30 a.m. (r) Timberwolves @ 6:30, 9:00 p.m. (r) Solar Sports - The NBA's newest stars Charlotte makes it debut in summer league play against Minnesota.

ZONAL UBC, 7 p.m., Solar Sports - Mythical showdown at its finest from Rizal Park.

GOLF: LPGA Championship, 10 p.m. (r) Sports Plus.

RP dragon boat team captures two medals

DONGGUAN CITY, China—The Philippines dragon boat team won two medals—a gold and a silver—as the Bulong Day at the Mall' drew to resounding [illegible] weekend.

Coach Nestor Bagat's 20-rowers ruled the open men's 1,000-meter race, beating host Dongguan and Hong Kong for the gold medal in the 14-team race.

The 80' mixed boats then took a silver in the 1,000-meter open mixed event, clocking 5 minutes 27.86 seconds.

Bulong A won the gold in 5:20.00, while Bulong B bagged the bronze in 5:30.96.

"The mixed race was close and we could hear team B not (make) moves were not exhausted after winning the event," said Bagat, who was also at the helm of the Philippine men's team that captured a gold and a silver in the Southeast Asian Games in Vietnam last year.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo (right) first lady Atty. Luli Arroyo and Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose Cojuangco Jr. (left) congratulate Olympian Elma Muros-Posadas and Francisco Bustamante, who will join the World Pool Championship. MALACAÑANG PHOTO BUREAU

Gabica joins RP pool entries in main draw

TAIPEI—The Filipino contingent continued its winning ways in the qualifiers for the 2004 Taiwan World Pool Championships as Antonio Gabica became the fourth Pinoy to win a spot in the main draw Wednesday.

Gabica joined compatriots Marlon Manalo, Rodolfo Luat and Antonio Lining in the tournament proper by beating Jason Chiang (host Taiwan, 9-6) to take the last remaining spot in Group F.

The 33-year-old from Cebu City had to keep his nerve in a tense final which saw Lin season a comeback only to lose his touch at crunchtime.

With Gabica on the verge of victory, the match referee had to step in to control the crowd, some of whom were attempting to distract the Filipino player while he was sweeping up the game.

Gabica had earlier defeated Ko Hsiao-an, the sole GE competitor in the qualifying tournament, in his semifinal. The home bet had earlier knocked out Filipino Leonardo Jochico.

"I'm happy to qualify because this is a difficult competition," said Gabica. But he blamed the crowd's unruly behavior as bad sportsmanship because it disturbed his concentration.

"I think a mistake too because I turned to look at the balls when he was playing and I'm sorry for that but I didn't have a problem with my opponent," he added.

Gabica said he's looking forward to meeting countryman Francisco Bustamante, the top seed in his group.

"I played Francisco in the 1997 and 1998 finals of the Dose Open but lost both times," said Gabica.

The other Filipinos who had qualified were Efren Reyes, Lee Van Corteza, Ramil Gallego, Rodolfo Luat and Warren Kiamco. US-based Filipino Ameng Barua was given a special invitation.

Arroyo, NSA heads meet tomorrow

By Marc Anthony Reyes

GMA set with 128 gold medals in the Southeast Asian Games next year?

First Gentleman Mike Arroyo will be asking the 32 national sports associations heads about this when he sits down with them tomorrow to assess the country's overall chances in the SEA Games to be held here.

Arroyo has already given the POC an initial financial assistance worth P5 million during his recent birthday celebration held at the Malacañang Park.

"The First Gentleman wants to be apprised of what it would take to fully prepare and gear up our flag-bearers for the Games and has instructed the PCC boundaries to also not support the athletes' training and preparation," said Buhain.

Buhain earlier said the country has a 126-gold medal target for the 2005 Games. The country lost to Indonesia in the battle for top host, set in the 1991 Manila edition by just one gold, 53-51. The Philippines also won 62 silvers and 85 bronzes/others.

In the meeting, Buhain said, each NSA leader will be asked to give their medal projection based on the lineup of events they have submitted to the SEA Games.

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New schedule for SRNH golf Super Tour

ORGANIZERS of the Strong Republic Nautical Highway (SRNH) Super Tour yesterday announced a revised schedule of the golf marathon to give the participating pro-ams more time to hone their games.

Although the event being staged to celebrate the Pearl Anniversary of the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) still will kick off on July 15, two days ahead of the original date as Wednesday, there will be a long gap before the final five legs are played.

The four, traversing the so-called Ilo-Ilo Route and making a top prize of P500,000, resumes on July 26 at the Mt. Makiling Golf Club for the start of a five-day stretch. It then moves to the Fairways & Bluewaters in Boracay, the Negros Occidental Golf and Country Club in Bacolod, Pueblo de Oro in Cagayan de Oro and Del Monte in Bukidnon.

Wallands Medina, chair of the SRNH Tour organizing committee, said 28 slots for the regular tour will be disputed on July 29.

The qualifiers will join the 20 seeded rookies led by Robert Bacosa, Gaviao Cano and Antonio Lascuña in the last five legs.

Jong Arcaya

SPORTSWATCH

Castañares kayoed by Isidon

PHILIPPINE junior welterweight champion Cleuto "Ernest" Castañares ran out of gas early and was knocked out in the third round by Indonesian Ida Isidon, 3 years older 19-Nguni, Sunday night at the 44/11 Studio in Jakarta. A feisty punch-out-town Castañares, who has yet to win an outright bout in three attempts, for good. His previous wins all ended in knockout victims at the hands of Mujahiro Gatuka and Bernard Hamy both in Japan. The loss dipped Castañares' record to 14 wins, 3 losses, and 1 draw with 10 KOs. **Jolene Laguardia-Zamfelder**

Brother of jangail's Handog dies

CARLO Gil, fanning, brother of junior Golf Foundation of the Philippines official Garry, died last July 8 due to a lingering ailment. He was 37. He is survived by wife Cancking, sons Lloyd, Jay and Richard, daughter Jessica under Carlo's parents Mr. and Mrs. Modesto Sandoval, brothers Rolly, Ramo, Jun, Benny and sisters Gloria and Conchita and grandchildren. His remains lie in state at the family residence in Bulacan, Dasmariñas, Cavite. Interment is on Tuesday, July 13.

Sportshasta-GNC final showdown

LAST year's top team GNC and 2002 winner Sportshasta clash for the Anthocyanin Phil. Amateur Association Friendship Cup this on Sunday at 11 a.m. at the ABT Sports. Last Sunday, Sportshasta routed the 6-0 finals said by dumping Antiport, 7:00-02, behind Michael Pantaleon, Martin Chan, Paul Sapa and Benedict Garcia. In the other match, Louie Gabriel had 30 points and James Mangaran, 20, to lead GNC to an 80-19 win over Mommy Magic for the other finals slot.

Quezon rivals play reunion match

THE BOOTH Seniors and The Bulahan Clinic Condoms, Concerts most popular homegrown basketball teams from the early '70s to the mid '80s collide in a reunion match set at 4 p.m. today in the town's municipal basketball court. Booter Bautista will be honored by to the UP Ma'am Gemma Del Valle. Bilmo Nolasco, Ramon Paunonbal and Lt. Col. Ded Reyes also will be honored. Bulahan Clinic stars Lemuel Bolight and former PBA player Noel Robles. Reunion in 40s and Chuck Mapua.

PFF chief attends Malaysia meeting

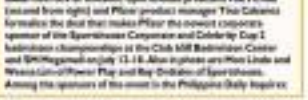
PHILIPPINE Football Federation president Johnny Thomasian took off for Malaysia last Tuesday to attend the Asian Football Confederation Council Meeting. It is his first international meeting since winning the post last January's While in Kuala Lumpur, Romualdez will also attend the 2004 Tiger Cup draw. The Philippine football team will see action in the Tiger Cup in November.

Mars Cup slated at Megamall

ALL SET for the 2004 Sportshouse Corporate and Celebrity Cup Badminton championships, the Mars Badminton Interior Cup will be held on July 10-16 starting at 7 p.m. at the Atrium of the SM Megamall in Mandaluyong City. Participation is free. Interested corporate players, however, are not eligible to participate. For details, call or text Ray Orduña at 0917-5051172.

JVC gathers best badminton talents

THE JVC Open Badminton Championships has gathered the best badminton talents in the corporate level with powerhouse All Lenses, PLDT and Meralco teaming up this battle to meet when the event is staged beginning July 11 with the qualifying round at the Puerto Azul Ancestral Hall at 24 companies is casting action in the corporate division, one of the only events hosting this year in the country's biggest and most prestigious badminton tournament sponsored by JVC.



BADMINTON SPONSOR: Sportshouse president Mars Chua (second from right) and Pfizer product manager Tina Cabanos formalize the deal that makes Pfizer the newest corporate sponsor of the Sportshouse Corporate and Celebrity Cup 2 badminton championships at the Club MB Badminton Center and SM Megamall on July 13-16. Also in photo are Mon Linda and Nivea Lim of Power Play and Ray Orduña of Sportshouse. Among the sponsors of the event is the Philippine Daily Inquirer.

On Jenny's swing

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

THE COLLECTIVE groans was, "Groaning." Actually, that means "Gone fossil" to English.

Too bad, indeed, that Jennifer Rankin missed winning the US Open. She was there...almost. One foot inside. She had the chance of a lifetime. She missed it.

No, she won't, and should be, "ostracized"...for the moment, at least, because she didn't really struggle. Or blow it away. She just wasn't pitched up yet to achieve the singular honor of reaching golf's summit for women. That'll be unfair to the games.

It wasn't her time. Yet.

Yes, I'm saying she now after going back to Johnny Miller's analysis of Jenny's swing.

Miller, golf's genius during his time and the most respected TV golf analyst today, had been chatting his TV coverage of the recent US Open that Jenny's swing is flawed.

How could one not believe Miller?

The guy, in his prime, was golf's Mr. Finest Swinger. Moreso than Vijay Singh. If his mind held what a four-day tournament on the fourth day he'd do just that—even if he were down seven strokes going to the last round. Such was Miller's genius there that he was more many than when Tiger Woods surged into the scene and into the field apart early in 1997.

I remember more that Miller won a major—the US Open, I guess—when it was almost impossible for him to win it. But he did, rallying from five strokes down at noon to win by three shots going to the last round despite that flawed swing.

Before I heard this long-talented friend of mine say Jenny's swing was flawed...and further augmented by his belief with Tommy Moscoso's similar discovery...I was already entertaining thoughts that, yes, Jenny's swing seemed to have changed—or been changed.

I should know. Since she crashed into the limelight as a teenager with a swing as smooth as silk. Too bad, I loved Jenny's swing—from the beautiful backswing to the graceful unwinding to virtually all the backfields that she had gone to, including the World tournaments in Santiago, Chile, in 1998. Watching her on TV during the US Open, I could see and sense that something was missing from that beautiful, free-flowing fluidity. If not Fred Couples-like, seeing that has earned her numerous victories before she hit the LPGA some four years ago.

That, this twelve, I pray and hope Jenny is home golfer. Because, to me, is not entertaining thoughts of rediscovering that old swing. She had already done a major revamp in her swing. Change saddles, a move that, incidentally has the general best return to swing recently on herself to resulting the process.

I am no expert but if Jenny will take my advice, hallelujah.

***

FAITHFUL: The prime movers of the UBS-Metro National 10-ball, led by Gregory's Sam "SMT" Rivera, president Danny Flores, golf rules man guru Toby Tolentino and MSAP secretary general Lucas Fernandez, met yesterday to map out preparations for the event in November at the Riviera Golf Club in Silang, Cavite. Expect another grand presentation of the nation's top pool gathering with the country's rank amateurs in the unique format, women's tournament that has withstood the test of time. This early, UBS is cooking up something big to spice up the tournament he had begun more four years ago by way of stocking up on the cash-in-the-pocket prizes in golf that had its baptism of fire in the '50s... Here's good news for Lanzo Espinosa, the former two-time world beating champion now based in San Francisco, CA. Jacky Rosario Cruz of the Manila NYC has finally tabbed the heading on July 13 Neptune's only-ing claim of P150,000 on his purse in his successful 1997 defense of his **dare would featherweight title in** Mirbel, South Cotabato Eaptown's annual fiesta celebration. Remember Dr. I now see Hermie Rivera, fiepinosa's discovery, smiling? Yes sir, if there's one person who can't tolerate injustice of any kind, that'd be Hermie, the question kid Rosario, La Union, has won gen-dared. If I'll take Hermie a lifetime to fight for what's due Espinosa, who captured his first world crown in the heavyweight division in 1989, he'll do it. Remember the more "unknowable" fellow I've ever known this side of unknowns.

Top seed loses game by ring of her cell phone

WUHAN National Master and tournament top-seed Christine Castellano went to unbelievable lengths to help the ring of her mobile phone to lead the rank of upsets that rocked the 2004 National Chess Championship yesterday at the Marketplace mall in Island Cluster City.

Castellano's phone rang in the middle of her match against Castanho, forcing her to forfeit the match under the (Fide) International Chess Federation imposed rule barring mobile phones during a game.

Several ranked players lost in yesterday's round of the event that will serve as a qualifier for the 36th World Chess Olympiad.

Former San Beda standout Ryan Franco defeated second seed International Master Richard Bitoon; National Master Oliver Santos brought down IM-candidate Ouswin Lapiz; Rebel Medrano, a government employee, beat NM Roberto Sarle, the former national junior champion while Bengil Lango rendered FM Jesse Karl Sales.

In other matches, NM Emmanuel Icasiano whipped Harold Neil Hernandez; third seed IM Chito Garma humbled Nimfan Pabo; fourth seed IM Bernardo Sosa whipped Glenn Garcia; FM Brian Dominguez edged Loren Gerardo; IM Boris Sailors defeated Franz Gerald; NM Roberto Wolfe subdued Hector Dela Cruz; IM Mendoza Hugo swapped Abdul-Hassan while Mario Schuler beat Bernd Balgais.

National Chess Federation of the Philippines president Rep. Marlon Solomon (Quezon City) said 11 slots are up for grabs in the men's and women's divisions in the 11-round Swiss system. NM Morelos Bermudez, contributor

WFP to launch sanshou clinic

VETERAN Chinese coach Ye Zhi-bo is launching a three-level wushu sanshou (full contact) course on July 15 for boys and girls 15 years old and above at the National Weeha Training Center atop the PCSH building on Admiral Street, Malate.

A project of the Wushu Federation of the Philippines headed by Julito Cainglet, the clinic is scheduled on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 6 to 7:30 p.m.

"Through these classes, we hope to attract martial arts and fitness enthusiasts and eventually widen the base of wushu fighters," said the 39-year-old former Chinese national champion who has produced outstanding Filipino campaigners like world titlist Rizo Catalan and freelancer Jesse Lanero gold medalist Edward Polgang.

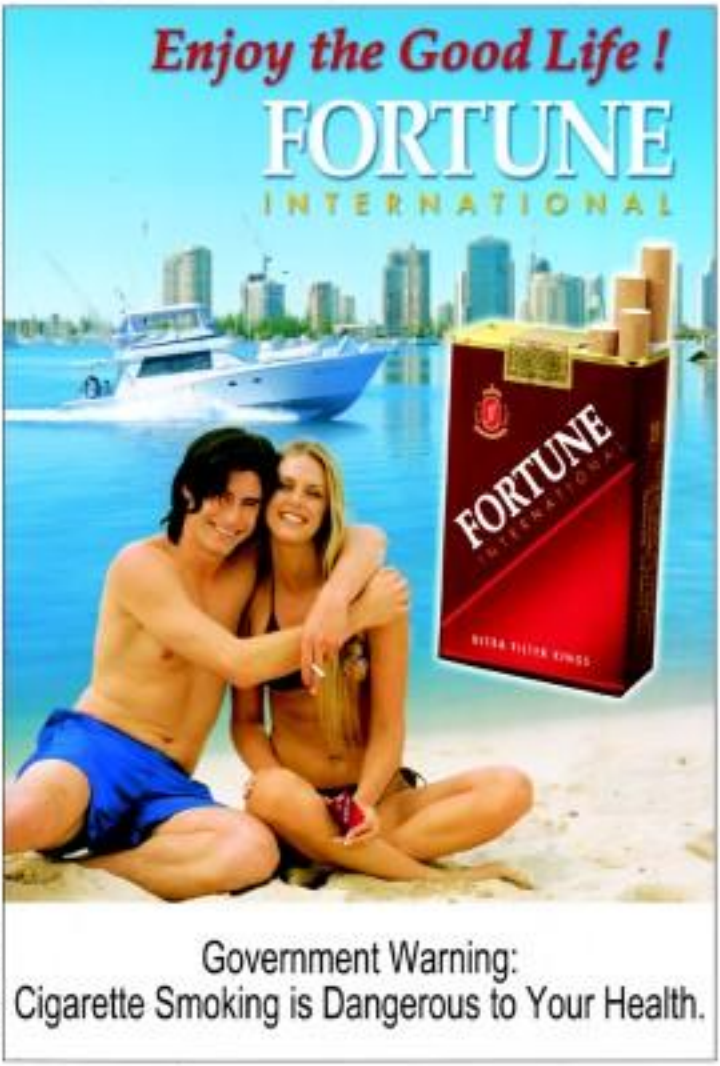
A fee of P1,500 will be charged each participant, who will be evaluated after three months for promotion to the next level. Interested parties may register at the WFP headquarters, 4th floor, PCSH building, Admiral Street or call 4041492.

According to Ye, level 1 is devoted to physical training, combination drills of punching and kicking and the development of offensive and defensive skills. A group of local fighters, led by Catalan and Polgang, will help the Chinese coach conduct the training.

Singson lands 3rd

FILIPINO Melendo Singson collected seven points to finish third in the expert division of the 32nd annual World Chess Open championships at the Adam's Hotel in Philadelphia. Singson piled up six wins and two draws against a lone loss in the division reserved for grandmasters with a rating below 2200. The University of the East standout was coming off a big win in the 40th National Open Chess Championships under 2200 division.

Martin Hernandez



De La Salle - 1st Runner Up Lyceum - 2nd Runner Up

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The mouse that roared

"SPIDER-MAN 2" grossed $40.1 million on its opening day setting a new record. Interestingly, the sequel broke the previous record set by the first "Spider-Man" movie (at $39.4 million).

The sequel has also set a new record first-day gross in the Philippines, delighting its production company and local distributor. But this feat has added to the woes of local producers, who are reeling from decreased earnings for Filipino movies and increased competition from foreign films—like the "Spider-Man" productions.

That's why some film people were pleading that the opening here of "Spider-Man 2" be delayed for at least a week, so the local movies removed in the Metro Manila Film Festival could make more money.

Also, the plea fell on deaf ears, so "Spider-Man 2" opened as scheduled, and proceeded to demolish the local competition, as local movie people had feared.

It's the filmic equivalent of the elephant and the mouse. When the elephant starts charging through the countryside, the mouse stores clear of the behemoth's rampage.

The irony, of course, is that in the Philippines, it should be the Filipino productions that should be lording it over the imports. But our old and seemingly deathless colonial mentality is saving us a thrashing we don't want happen.

What to do, aside from storing clear of the rampaging behemoth that is the Hollywood blockbuster? Perhaps the image of the mouse can provide an answer. If the mouse can represent the local independent producers who belatedly smell the edge

VENTINGS

Nestor U. Torre

projects, alternative Filipino films can be made more competitive not by "going Hollywood" as sounding the behemoth, but by competing on their own terms.

How to do that? Decades ago, Mounted Gender's "Stars Initial Goes to Congress" showed the way. It was a small film that clicked with viewers because of its no-tongues speech on politics, Filipino-style.

In the '90s, it was "Watching Pusit." The films made a killing even as the height of a huge wave because it mined local mythology for its comic inheritance.

In the '70s, Lino Brocka's "Tinimbang Ka Ngunit Kulang" hit it big at the box office despite its lack of star value, because it addressed small-town traditions and hypocrisies—and it was marketed as a must-see movie for Catholic schools.

Of late, other "disrupt" hits include "Singing Yanson" and "Sing Yanging Ina," proving that, if competitively astutely, the local filmic mouse still has what it takes to make the huge, lumbering Hollywood pachyderm go "Eeek!"

Feedback

FROM Mrs. Amarena P. Maceda, chair of the international Film Festival Committee of the Film Development Council of the Philippines, to director Marilou I. de los Reyes: "This has reference to the May 24 FDI article wherein you were quoted.... Take the case of the international film committee (IFFCOM). There's not much red tape. You already have an invitation to the international festival but the committee gives you a hard time before you are allowed the privilege. It would be better if there is a secretariat to take care of the visa, airfare, booking, etc. and not the ones invited to the festival to take care of these details themselves...."

"We feel there is a need to clarify matters with regards to the assistance extended by FDI/DTI. The committee was established to manage the funds sourced from government appropriations. Since the funds are public money, they can only be disbursed following government rules and regulations on accounting and auditing procedures. The IFFCOM's basic mandate is therefore to see to it that these government rules and regulations are followed accordingly.

"As you well know, the procedure is for the producer whose film has been invited to an international film festival to request IFFCOM for financial assistance for subtitling, production of posters, and travel expenses for two representatives of the film who will attend the festival. If the request is approved, the producer may claim the financial subsidy through reimbursements of allowable expenditures.

"In view of this, IFFCOM's members even extend financial assistance and not to provide entertainment support to the producers which the production company must undertake on its own.

"We hope that this will clarify certain misconceptions of IFFCOM's support to films invited to international film festivals."

Will another ex pop up and threaten Ipe?

come to his defense. Will there be endless invitations? Who will suddenly pop up and threaten Ipe?

Kris hopes

MOR hopes not it again.

Kris's remaining to high heavens that she and Mark Lapid have split up and would just remain friends, she announced on "The Buzz" that she bought Mark two bottles of perfume and is hoping that he would love her again.

She may have said that in jest but it leaves the viewers wondering where her head really is. Seems like it's always subject to change without prior notice.

Dieter and Kristine

DIETER Ocampo and Kristine Hermosa are a uneven example of how the best things in life are sometimes the things that we don't plan. Both of them have been paired off with other screen partners, but looks like fate has thrown them together. They make such a beautiful couple and I certainly hope they will take the plunge soon.

Lea in 'Baby'

"Stuff" the musical features a stellar cast led by Lea Salonga as Lizzie, a college student in her 20s who finds herself pregnant. It is Lea's first musical in Manila since performing "Miss Saigon" almost four years ago.

Joining her are Olivier Sarundajang as Brad, Jett Pangan as Miguel Bustamante and Shiela Lisa Bongco as Tala.

"Baby" was nominated for seven Tony Awards. It will be directed by Bobby Garcia, with musical direction by Emmanuel Salonga.

"Baby" runs from Aug. 18 to Sept. 5 at the Meralco Theater.

For tickets, call Atlantis Productions, 892-7670 or 840-1107, or Ticketworld at 891-9999.

'Los Buzzes'

"Los Buzzes: New Graphic Images" is an exhibition designed by the Asociacion Francaise d'Action Artistique (AFAA). The works of 13 illustrators have been selected for the exhibit.

Catch the exhibit that runs until July 23 at the AP Ateneo Gallery in E. JOS N. Garcia St., Bel-Air II, Makati City.

For more information, please call 895-7585 or 895-7441.

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THURSDAY, JULY 8, 2004 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BUSINESS B1

Lito Raul D. Marcelo
Assistant Editor Corrie S. Nakpil

Ultron
The Ultimate Release from Engine Stress. From Petron.

Pagcor sets sights on Internet, text gaming

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE STATE-OWNED Philippine Amusements and Gaming Corp. has informed the National Telecommunications Commission that it would operate games of chance through cellular phones and the Internet to generate additional revenues for the government.

MTC Chair Ronald Solis said that Pagcor sought four more members to send and receive text and multi-media messages as well as access media with Internet service providers or ISPs.

Pagcor spokesperson Edward King said the gaming agency would like all text games to be routed through numbers that Pagcor could regulate. These numbers are 886, 777, 876, and 787.

"In the event that we classify any game of chance as TV or betting, then we would ask them to centralize this through the numbers so Pagcor could regulate them," King said in an interview.

This way, Pagcor would have an idea of how much telecom companies earn from text gaming and so it could collect the government's 25-percent share, he added.

King said that right now, Pagcor has yet to classify any ongoing campaign of telecom or broadcast firms as text gaming activities last year when the then-star company filed a case against a television game show for allegedly stepping into the bounds of gambling.

"What we request joint assistance in ensuring the compliance of mobile cellular operators and ISP providers in successfully fulfill this mandate of Pagcor with the necessary access facilities and collateral assistance to see this through," Pagcor vice president Rene Figueroa said in his letter to Solis.

The state-owned gaming firm told the MTC that it was tasked to control, administer and supervise all games of chance.

"In the furtherance of its mandate as the exclusive provider of gaming activities in the country, and in order to generate revenue for the national government, Pagcor intends to operate games of chance through the Internet and wireless mobile cellular networks in the country," Figueroa said in his letter.

King said Pagcor had no estimate of how much additional revenues it could generate from operating Internet and text games.

Before the controversy over text gaming surfaced in late 2002, there were reports in the House committee on games and amusements that telecom giants Smart Communications Inc. and Globe Telecom Inc. earned between P1 million and P6 million in the first half of 2002 from text gaming alone.

Pagcor's franchise involves mobile the regulation of casino operations in the country. But its officials insisted that it was tasked to regulate activities that offer a form of wagering, such as the element of chance or the possibility of winning a prize.

The gaming firm is also considering an expansion of its Internet operations with the introduction of "Jolinesburg," an online cockfighting service wherein bettors can use the slot in place from bets for different game formats, such as singles, derbys, and Hell the Derby Champion.

Pagcor said it had yet to determine how big the market would be for an online betting system for cock fighting since not all bettors, especially from the provinces, would have access to the Internet.

Fiscal woes dampen business outlook

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas does not expect any significant improvement in the fiscal business outlook over the next few months pending the resolution of the government's fiscal woes.

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura told reporters during the annual meeting of bi-business expectations survey (BES) on operations yesterday that there would likely be little change in the overall business outlook although indices.

"It will either remain the same or (show) a slight improvement. While people are optimistic, they probably are aware of the challenges faced by the government," Buenaventura said.

Based on the results of the last BES released by the BSP in May, the overall outlook index for the second quarter remained positive

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F&J Prince to acquire 35% of BPO Int'l

F&J PRINCE Holdings Corp. said it had agreed to buy 35 percent of BPO International Inc.

The company will spend about P60 million for the acquisition, which will expand its presence in the growing outsourcing business.

In a disclosure, F&J Prince said it had signed an agreement with Project Quest Corp., Montcourt Realty Corp., and other individual investors to purchase acquire 200 percent of BPO International.

The acquisition will be made through a combination of the purchase of shares from existing shareholders and subscription to primary shares of BPO after obtaining necessary government approvals.

F&J Prince owns 80 percent of Business Technology Corp., a software marketing and development company.

PIC is also 80 percent owned by Project Quest Corp. and 10 percent by Allen Cruz.

Semirara equity restructuring OKd

By Elizabeth L. Sanders

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission has approved the equity restructuring of Semirara Mining Corp., the country's largest coal producer.

As part of the proposed restructuring, Semirara will reduce its authorized capital stock to P12.27 million shares of common shares from 6% shareholders.

It will also write its subscribed and paid-up capital to 6.9% 29 million from P1.035 billion.

It will then increase its authorized capital to P200 million from P12.27 million worth of common shares and its subscribed capital stock to P25 million from P6.94 million.

The company had asked the PSE to lift the suspension on the trading of its shares last June 15. It was advised that the trading resume suspended pending approval by the PSE of the reduction in the number of listed common shares and the delisting of 25,000 preferred shares under its reserve listing plan.

The capital restructuring aims to wipe out the company's accumulated deficit in retained earnings of P1.621 billion, write and restore 15,000 preferred shares and build up new capital for the company.

The company last traded in 90 centavos per share last December 2002.

SMC Holdings, which owns about 76 percent of the company, will subscribe to 16.66 million common shares at P1.00 per share for a total of P22.66 million. The transaction may be subject to the PSE's rule on additional listing of shares.

Semirara was incorporated on Feb. 26, 1980 to explore, develop and mine the coal resources in Semirara Island in Antique.

In 2003 it accounted for 98 percent of the country's total coal production.

ENERGY Secretary Vincent Perez (right) graced the recent inauguration of Luzon Hydro's Friendship Bridge.

Bridge seals Luzon Hydro's commitment to host town

By Abigail L. Ho

SEEMS believe that some represent blessings. But to the residents of Alilem in Ilocos Sur, strong rains usually mean something else.

While the blessing of a downpour didn't lead to a wild celebration, it was nothing to be sniffed at that a mere pair of the usually calm Amburayin River leaves the town's residents praising for a calm season to go to the next town.

During the typhoon months of July to October, the river rises to unmanageable levels, making it impossible to commute. This, then, leaves Alilem's island 6,000 residents isolated from the rest of the province.

And it is not to mention the social aspect of their existence that gets the town people particularly worried during times of rough weather. Their concern involves the town's cash-base agricultural products—fruits, root crops, rice, livestock and more—if taken outside of Alilem.

Welcome treat

After years of enduring the river's rage just to transport their basic products outside of town, the Alilem residents got a welcome treat last August from Luzon Hydro Corp. (LHC), a partnership between Alsons Equity Partners and Australian firm Incite Hydro Ltd., which operates the 70-megawatt Bakun AC Mbenefactor. From then on the issues of Alilem.

Dubbed the Luzon Hydro Friendship Bridge, the newly completed structure is said under the land-to-market transport of Alilem's agricultural products have road safety, especially during the typhoon months.

"A concrete bridge has always been a dream for us. The construction of the bridge will surely lead to the development of this town and the improvement of the quality of life of the residents," Alilem Mayor Ramon Ranget said.

Officers of the LHC consortium were more than happy to undertake the project as they aimed to help the company be really kept the people of Alilem, their "home" for the Bakun plant.

LHC chief Ernesto Ayala said the company wanted to be part of the community where it had its operations and wanted land to be involved but as an actual stakeholder in the development of the town.

"It is our intention to contribute in a meaningful way to the development and improvement of the living standards of our host. We do not think it is enough to be considered guests. We want to be one of you," he said during a speech delivered before the Alilem townsfolk on the day the bridge was inaugurated.

Town stakeholder

LHC managing director Graham Corbishley said building strong relationships with people in their host communities usually took a lot of time and effort.

CORPORATE CITIZEN

While the residents of Alilem had been very cooperative and kind to LHC, he said it had already been a challenge for an investor like LHC to get its hosts to be comfortable around people who are not from the province.

Keeping this in mind, he said the establishment of the bridge not only sealed their commitment to the Bakun project but more so to the people of Alilem.

"It takes a long time to build relationships with communities to the point when they're comfortable. We have not always been successful," he said. "But we'd like to look to as a project set up as a model for the Philippines and other parts of the world."

Aside from building the bridge, LHC has also energized some foreigners in Alilem and has even coordinated building materials to put up an elementary school building there.

Ayala said the bridge was not the first form of assistance that LHC had extended to the people of Alilem and the province of Ilocos Sur. And it was not going to be the last either.

Developing community

In past years, he related that LHC had even gotten down to the nitty-gritty of the area. Medical missions and medicine distribution efforts had also become regular projects for the firm.

He said education was also a top priority for LHC when thinking of more ways to help the people of Alilem. "We have to be sustainable. At the very least the very least, LHC had spearheaded some scholarship programs and other educational services to the poor in terms the Alilem when it had a presence.

The Friendship Bridge, he said, only served to seal LHC's commitment to helping Alilem as a progressive and developed and could get.

Officials of Alilem town, Ilocos Sur, LHC and the Department of Energy all beamed with pride as they stood in the far end of the bridge bearing its Alilem's Barangay Tadiangan during its inauguration in June.

But people had most grateful are the townspeople themselves who look forward to making good use of the bridge for years to come.

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The country's largest foreign bank recently launched Citibanking, a unique financial service geared for the middle income market, designed to help individuals realize their financial aspirations – from owning a home to how to manage their children's education to being their own boss to managing a comfortable retirement.

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"Citiffice essentially combines your assets, resources, and is a complimentary financial check-up that requires no commitment to the service," explained Citibank's Senior Retail Banking Director for Citibank, "The Citiffice session can help you draw up a financial plan suited to your particular goal and based on an assessment of your investment needs, investment objectives, and risk profile. Your plan then becomes a roadmap to help manage your finances and determine the feasibility of your financial goals."

The Citiffice Session is a step-by-step process comprising of an interview to obtain more client info up to risk tolerance information. It starts with one's personal profile such as name, age, date of birth, savings or deposit accounts, assets and loans, expenses and the like. Then Citiffice considers the short- and long-term goals of the client, be it to invest in an appropriate, to get education, or to plan for retirement, which such a session one's risk profile before computing how much one should adjust his or her savings-to-consumption-ing habits in order to achieve those goals. The last stage of Citiffice is when it gives ideas on the types of investments and other financial tools one should get into based on one's risk profile.

"Citibanking can be seen as a ready check to get investors to review their savings and spending habits and refocus their financial resources to more their priorities," concludes Lovajan.

To know more about Citibanking or schedule a free Citiffice Financial Check-up, call 894-71-52 or visit www.citibank.com.ph.

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DISCLOSURES

PCI Leasing and Finance Inc. bought 284,000 (PCI) new shares at P1.10 each.

MACROHS Holdings Inc. moved its annual stockholders' meeting to Dec. 10 at General Malvar Street, Barangay San Antonio, Pasig City.

EIBDP Group Corp. approved the redemption of its 10.75 million outstanding preferred shares and the payment of accumulated dividends on the said shares in the aggregate amount of P80.226 million. Redemption and payment will be on July 16.

Eg-Hdc Equities Inc. scheduled its annual stockholders' meeting on Aug. 28, 9 a.m. at the Manila Polo Club, Makati City. Stockholders of record as of July 28 will be entitled to notice of and to vote at the meeting.

CEDITEC Ecuador University will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on July 27, 3 p.m. at the University Board Room, Mendiola St. cor. Manila. Stockholders of record as of July 1 are entitled to notice of and vote at the meeting.

HYDRO Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on Sept. 30, 10 a.m. at the Alcazar and Spa in Legaspi Village, Makati City. Stockholders of record as of Aug. 20 will be entitled to notice of and to vote at the meeting.

Bel-Air Tax Consolidated Industries Inc. distributed other than the appointed cash of Union Garment Holdings Corp. shares held by the company and its subsidiary Mid Garment Corp. to Union Holdings Inc., the company has no other information to explain the increase in its class A preferred from P171 to P18.00 each. *Compiled by Maricar P. Tubeza, PDI Research*

Fiscal woes . . .

Posted July 8 | Updated July 8, 2004 - 12:00am

But declined to 19.9 percent from 26 percent in the first quarter.

For the third quarter of 2004, the overall business outlook (BOI) forces index increased to 32.4 percent from 25.2 percent in the previous quarter as respondents expected growth to continue in all sectors.

Businessmen noted that the government's fiscal position was seen being decreased in the open and that investor mood beginning to appreciate shaky values in the government to resume its budget shortfall.

The government's ballooning deficit was among investors' major concerns over the last few years.

This developed as the government incurred a record deficit of P214 billion in 2002, while the shortfall for 2003 remained problematic at P199.7 billion and year.

The year, the government is targeting to cap the budget shortfall at P197.5 billion and until year at P184.1 billion. It aims to attain a balanced budget by 2008.

"Our only hope is to come up with a solid program that is well thought of, and factors every shortfall that this program would be followed," Bautista said.

The BSP, which conducts the MS every quarter, plans to incorporate a consumer expectation survey that aims to measure consumers' confidence levels.

The consumer confidence survey is targeted to start next month, for publication by mid-August.

Jollibee names new head of China unit

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

JOLLIBEE Foods Corp. (JFC), the largest fast food chain in the Philippines, said it had chosen a new president for its food business in China effective yesterday, replacing Lee Yu An, who resigned from Jollibee Enterprise to "pursue" his advocacies.

JFC owns 85 percent of Belmont, the holding company of China's Yonghe King business.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE), JFC said Jollibee Chin was named the new president of Belmont and honorary chair of the company's board.

JFC president Tony Tan Caktiong said in a statement that Chin "will provide the leadership that will bring Yonghe King to the next level of growth in China."

At the same time, JFC announced yesterday that the sales of Yonghe King, China's fast food giant, grew 44 percent to P3.55 billion in the first six months of the year.

"Jeffrey has a solid track record of building the fast food business in China and has the unique combination of excellent operations skills and entrepreneurial instincts," Tan Caktiong said in a statement.

Chin, who is ranked 19th by 20/twenty's Executive in building the food service business, was born in Taiwan. He joined McDonald's in Taiwan in 1984 and then moved to China in 1991 to join KFC where he opened the Hangzhou outlet.

Tan Caktiong recommended Chin for Yonghe's financial performance as sales grew 26.8 percent to the first quarter and 44.1 percent to the second quarter.

DEBT SERVICING

Forex reserves down to $16.2B

By Doris C. Dumlao

TEMPORARY

THE COUNTRY's gross international reserves slipped to $16.2 billion as of end-June from $16.55 billion a month ago due to outflows from public sector debt servicing.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas reported yesterday that the current GIR level, however, was still adequate to cover 6.4 months of imports of goods and payments of services and income.

"The decline in reserves was mainly due to the debt service requirement of the national government and withdrawal by the National Power Corp. of its foreign exchange deposits with the BSP," the BSP said.

The current level was also equivalent to 3.3 times the country's short-term debt based on original maturity and 1.3 times based on residual maturity.

Short-term debt based on residual maturity refers to maturities falling due within the next 12 months.

With the decline in the BSP level, the RAFI's net international reserves likewise decreased by $381 million from end-May to $13.86 billion in June, inclusive of revaluation of reserve assets and reserve-related liabilities.

Despite the slight decline in end-June GIR, however, BSP Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said the country's overall balance of payment position would likely improve for the rest of the year.

He said stronger export earnings as well as remittances from overseas Filipino workers would likely boost foreign exchange inflows in the following months.

The BSP measures the foreign exchange transactions between the public and private sectors of the economy and the rest of the world. Its major components are the current account and the capital and financial account.

The current account records trade in goods and services as well as transfers while the capital and financial account records loan transactions, investment flows, short-term capital and other related items.

Any transaction that involves foreign exchange payment by a Philippine resident like importation of offshore investment is a debit item while transactions involving receipt of foreign exchange such as exportation and inward remittances and investments are surplus items. The Philippines posted a balance of payments surplus of $437 million in the first five months of the year, a sharp turnaround from the $526-million shortfall in the same period last year.

Flour millers offer discounts to keep 'pandesal' prices stable

By Rosinel W. Dantingo

THE NATIONAL Price Coordinating Council yesterday said flour millers had agreed to help restrain prices of bread, especially the popular pandesal, by giving discounts to bakers.

Trade Undersecretary Adrian S. Cristobal Jr., who is also NPCC chair, said the local millers had committed to give between P39 and P50 in discounts per 25-kilogram bag of flour to the bread- and pandesal-making industry.

"The Department of Trade and Industry appreciates the initiative of the four millers to help keep down the overall production costs of bakers," Cristobal said.

The official added that prices of hard flour had been stable at P618 per bag in the past two months.

Last week, the Philippine Confederation of Bakers Associations Inc. (PBMA) said the government must step in and help abate the increases in the prices of bread ingredients and avoiding gas to stop an imminent hike in the price of pandesal.

PBMA president Leonardo Figueroa said bakers were trying their best to keep the price of pandesal at a year per 25-gram piece.

Figueroa said the weight of a standard piece of pandesal might have to be adjusted or the price changed if the upward in prices of main bread ingredients continued.

As a result, the group had opted to sell pandesal at P2 a piece but at below the usual size or 50 grams a piece.

Yesterday, Cristobal said the Henry Sy-owned unit was back in the market and was still available at P1 per 25-gram piece.

Last year, the DTI...along with the Bureau of Food and Drug and the private sector—launched the Pandesal Piece campaign, to cushion the impact of rising flour prices.

Consumer row have a choice to buy either the one-piece pandesal or the 5½ variety according to their budgets and needs, he said.

Also at yesterday's press briefing office the NPCC's weekly meeting, Agriculture Undersecretary Jesus Capellan said prices of agricultural products affected by Typhoon "Igme" were normalizing.

Prices are likely to move during the rainy months, but then easily slide back to normal three to four days after a typhoon, Capellan explained.

She said salad vegetables like potatoes, carrots and lettuce were the most affected by the typhoon.

Further, prices of galunggong went up due to short supply during the rainy season. Government data showed that the staple fish now fetches P90 a kilo from P70 last week.

Prices of milkfish and tilapia, however, remained stable at P60 and P75 per kilo, respectively. The retail price of pork was pegged at P120 a kilo.

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500,000 - 999,999	5.25	5.75	6.00	6.00	7.25
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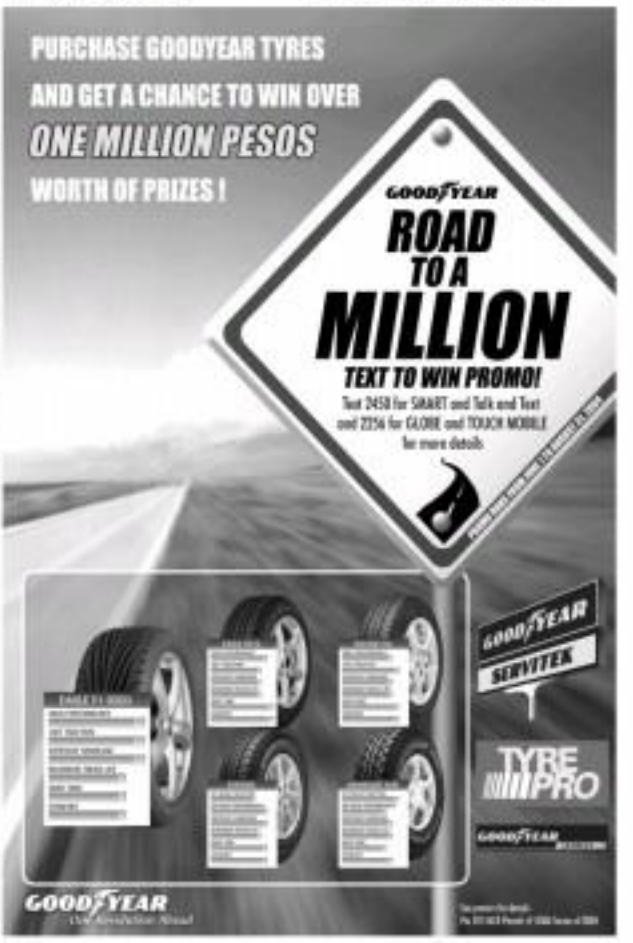

BUSINESS

NO SUPREME COURT ORDER

Meralco bucks move to pay interest charges

By Abigail L. Ho

THE MANILA ELECTRIC CO., the country's largest private electric utility, said it would not pay interest on its P50-billion refund.

Meralco vice president for corporate communications Elpy Cuaso said Monday could not be compelled to pay interest on the refund as demanded by a consumer group as it was not required by the Supreme Court.

The National Association of Electricity Consumers for Reforms (Nasecore) filed a motion with the Energy Regulatory Commission seeking interest payments on the refund.

Cuaso said Nasecore's motion had "absolutely no basis."

"The Supreme Court's order did not mention any provision for interest payments. According to the Supreme Court, the computation of the refund is straightforward, meaning 16.7 centavos multiplied by the kilowatt hours (kWh) Meralco sold since February 1994. The Supreme Court did not say 16.7 centavos plus interest," he said.

The high court in November 2003 ordered Meralco to give back to its customers around P50 billion worth of income tax charges passed on to them from November 1994 to April 2003.

When the order became final and executory last year, the Lopez-led firm then proceeded to implement the refund in phases.

Cuaso said Meralco was complying with the Supreme Court order, and had so far given refunds to about 90 percent of its customers, to date.

He said Nasecore's interpretation of the facts was based on "its own assumptions."

"The refund has effectively wiped out our net income for 10 years. So Mr. Ilagan suggesting that we be penalized further when in fact we have already suffered unjustly because of a sudden change in the rules of the game applied retroactively?" he said.

Apart from the motion to compel Meralco to pay interest on the refund, Nasecore also has a pending petition asking the high tribunal to prevent the Lopez-led firm from increasing its rates by 11.27 centavos per kWh.

Meralco sought the rate hike to reflect the additional cost of power purchased from the National Power Corp. and to independent power producers.

The additional rate, which was passed on to consumers starting last month, would not go to Meralco's coffers, he said.

It would only reflect the cost of power purchased from November 2003 to January 2004.

Cuaso instead challenged the group to file a petition to stop Napocor from increasing its rates by as much as P1.87 per kWh.

Moody's, S&P affirm Globe debt ratings

By Clarissa S. Batino

MOODY'S Investors Service and Standard & Poor's have affirmed their debt ratings on telecommunications giant Globe Telecom Inc.

This was despite concerns that Globe's financial would weaken following its request to change the terms of its debt ratios that [illegible].

"S&P believes that Globe's request for its creditors' consent for these amendments indicates the possibility of an increase in the company's debt burden," the New York-based rating firm noted in its most bulletin.

S&P last month upgraded its rating on Globe's local currency debt to BB plus from BB. Its rating on the company's foreign debt was kept at BB.

"Although the company's financial profile could potentially weaken due to these amendments, it is expected to remain consistent with the current rating level," said S&P.

Moody's, on the other hand, affirmed its Ba2 with a negative outlook on Globe's foreign currency debt and Ba1 with a stable outlook on its local currency borrowings.

"The current rating level factors into the expectation that the company may increase dividend payments and share buyback in the future. Moody's expects company's overall leverage to increase," Moody's said.

Globe asked bondholders to relax the provisions that restricts Globe from paying out more than 60 percent of its net income as dividends and from issuing bonds worth more than $125 million.

Globe wanted the ceiling for the bond increased to $200 million.

Moody's said its current rating and outlook on Globe reflect the risks associated with the company's exposure to a volatile regional economy at a time when it lacks a diversified debt with pure denominated earnings.

"Furthermore, the risks associated with the political and economic uncertainty evident in the Philippines are apparent. Notably, any deterioration in the political environment could impact Globe's ongoing access to the capital markets as well as the regulatory environment and the prospects for continued growth," added Moody's.

Gov't to adopt IMF debt model

By Michelle V. Rivera

THE GOVERNMENT is set to adopt a new method of computing public sector debt as proposed by the International Monetary Fund.

Under the new method, government borrowings from government owned and controlled corporations, government financial institutions and social security institutions would be included from the computation of public sector debt, according to an official of the Department of Finance.

Money placed by the national government in the Fund used by the Central Bank Board of Liquidators to pay off the old Central Bank's debts would also be included.

The DoF said these amounts should not be reflected in the public sector debt since the money came from other government agencies.

The IMF pushed for the adoption of the new system of computing public sector debt during discussions with finance officials last week.

The IMF said the proposed system was already adopted in other countries.

Excluding these amounts from computing public debt would improve the country's debt-to-GDP (gross domestic product) ratio from 127.5 percent to at least 111.2 percent, according to the DoF officials.

In 2003, the country's public sector debt stood at P5.758 trillion.

The 2003 figures were supposed to have been released last month but the data had to be revised following the adoption of the new debt computation method.

LIFESTYLE

Editor Cheio Bernal-Formoso

MONDAY ARTS • TUESDAY FITNESS • WEDNESDAY 3BU • THURSDAY FOOD • FRIDAY HOME & FASHION • SUNDAY SURPRISES

Salvation served on a plate

Text and photos by Pam Pastor

TWO AT DIN salvation, one must have faith, live a righteous life and repent for one's sins.

Or, you can go to this restaurant.

Moksha, which means "salvation" in Hindi, is the brainchild of Liz Montenegro and Glenn Yap.

What was an Indian-themed restaurant when it opened in September 2003 is now a haven for a palate-pleasing fusion of eastern and western food.

"We made a 360-degree turn in October," Montenegro said.

The proprietors met 10 years ago in a bar. They had so much in common—including the bottles of Bacardi Limon they were downing and the cigarettes they were smoking—that they were drawn to each other. Sparks flew, but only the platonic kind. They kept in constant touch and, four years ago, they started dreaming around the idea of opening their own restaurant.

It made sense. Montenegro, whose family has been in the catering business for several generations now, is no stranger to the food industry. And Yap, who studied bartending in Virginia and received his MBA from the Asian Institute of Management, could put his knowledge to good use.

Last year, they finally decided to get moving—and fast. In two weeks they had a place, said in a month construction was finished. "It's a very good partnership," they said.

The partners' roles are very defined. She is the queen of the kitchen while he takes care of the bar. They are meticulous and detail-oriented—from the training of the staff to the interiors of the restaurant.

BLUEBERRY cheesecake (P115)

Montenegro's training program for employees, which she holds in their kitchen in Antipolo, includes an obstacle course while carrying trays.

Relaxed class

Klassic Inn, their interior decorator, has fulfilled their dream of creating a homey, cozy bar atmosphere. You can see a mix of European and Asian touches—from the tables and chairs to the lamps and art works. The mood is relaxed since, "We want to bring fine dining to the casual level," they said.

But don't be fooled by the casual tag. The partners are all about quality. Everything in the restaurant was carefully chosen—even the utensils and china.

"You cannot put good food on bad plates," Yap said, his eyes twinkling. After a a few

STUFFED Chinese Siomai with Spicy Mango Sauce (P119)

Moksha, which started as an Indian-themed restaurant, has switched to a palate-pleasing fusion of East and West

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"YOU CANNOT be beautiful people walk on dirty floors," said Yap.

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word. Yap and Montealegre are very conscious about making sure their customers "are not being clean-changed."

Even the floor was not taken for granted; in fact, they have been getting a lot of feedback on their beautiful patterned tiles. Yap said, "If the floor symbolizes the boiled system, then it has to be very good. You cannot let beautiful people walk on dirty floors."

After the eat-ery, Moliche transforms from a restaurant to a nightspot...with drinks overflowing and chillout music playing.

People have been enjoying the place. One group stayed from 7 p.m. 'i a.m. To the one

CLASS room casual at Moliche.

CRISPED Open Whatever with beef or chicken toppings (P175)

PERFECT partners, Liz Montealegre and Glenn Yap

that played each after their meal. A number of politicians and celebrities have also made Moliche their ultimate getaway.

Iliar Montealegre and Yap are planning to open another restaurant in Makati. But for now do not claim credit for Moliche's success; they share the kudos with their staff. "It's a team effort. There's no hierarchy."

The two stress the importance of treating their employees like members of the family and constantly nurturing creative learning.

And their system works. Each person in the Moliche family can do everything needed to run the restaurant. Multi-tasking at its best. They tried to example Pearl Esguerra, who "can do everything. She can cook, be can mix drinks, be can serve, he can run the cash register..."

While running Moliche may sound like a lot of work, it seems a breeze for the duo. They say they are very used to stress. Besides, the pay-off is more than worth it. "The joy there is when you see them eat," Montealegre said.

My first taste of Moliche was indeed an all-out delight. I began with Crisped Open Whatever (P175). Diners have a choice between beef or chicken toppings. I tried both and they were equally tasty. The Chicken Curry (asked-garnish salad with curry-and-grilled chicken slices, P150) was refreshing.

Although I'm not really a big soup fan, I couldn't get enough of the Vegetable Italian Soup Forgetarian soup with squash and potatoes, P95. I don't even remember the Seaweed.

Harmony in a dish

For the main course, I had Stuffed Chicken Hawaii with Spicy Mango Sauce (P195). The chicken was juicy and the mango sauce lent the dish layers of flavors and different textures. It was fantastic on a plate. And yes, I'm still dreaming about it.

The meal ended with a yummy slice of blueberry cheesecake (P120), a recipe from Montealegre's Teaching.

Other items here are Mimi's Homemade Italian Spaghetti (P140) and Pasta Mgue (P160). Yap and Montealegre also recommend their specialties—resultant beanges in Mustard Sauce (grilled assorted sausages served with potatoes, P175), Pork Belly Bistec (grilled pork belly served with vegetables and Moliche's homemade salsa, P190), Duck Fillet Mignon in Sherry Sauce (pan sea-seared and slow cooked in sherry and spices, P175) and the Moliche Platter (grilled beef, sausages, chicken and fish served with cumin, green beans and vegetables, P650).

Good service, good quality, good food. If this is salvation, I'm definitely having seconds.

Moliche Resto & Bar is at 712 Aboi Santos Place corner Wilson St. San Juan, Greenhills. It's open every day 11.30 a.m. 1.30 a.m. The place may also be reserved for parties. Call 723-0314 or 0916-6204350.

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Entries now accepted for Doreen Fernandez award

THE DOREEN Gamboa Fernandez (DGF) Food Writing Award will have for its theme this year "Traditional Filipino Cooking."

Entries will have to be about cooking done in Filipino homes for generations. Subjects can be dishes as simple as grilled or braised, like everyday fare, complicated to prepare, or ornamental, as fiesta food.

The contest is open to everyone except members of sponsoring groups, their spouses and children. Contestants must use a pen name.

Essays have to be in English, not less than 4,500 but not more than 5,000 characters (about 800 words), two pages, double-spaced on short bond paper.

There is a special category for students.

An entry should be submitted together with a sealed envelope containing information on the author: (1) name; (2) pen name; (3) how he/she found out about the contest; (4) residential address and telephone number; (5) business address and telephone number, if working outside the home; (6) school name, address, and course if enrolled in university or vocational school, or grade level if in elementary or high school; (7) e-mail address; (8) cell phone number; (9) fax number.

An important consideration in this year's competition is research, which can involve a description of the cooking process, inclusion of the local name or numerous name of ingredients or even scientific names, cultural or historical explanation for the kind of cooking, or even a quote from the local cook or a master vendor or passages from a book.

Research has to be documented in the essay and should not be just footnotes or bibliographies, although sources should be acknowledged.

Deadline for submission of entries is Aug. 27. They may be sent by post or in person to the Doreen Gamboa Fernandez Food Writing Award, 1005 Manila Ladies Branch Awards Committee, Prism, U.P. PDAP Building, Area Gil Puyat Avenue, Makati City (near the corner of Ilaw). Call Myla Torres at 8995866.

This year's award is a joint project of the International Wine and Food Society (IWFS), Manila Ladies Branch and the Slow Food Manila Convivium.

The IWFS, founded in 1933, is the world's oldest and most prestigious gastronomic society outside the trade with some 7,500 members and over 140 branches in 40 countries worldwide. Slow Food is an international movement founded in Italy in 1986, dedicated to preserving and supporting traditional ways of growing, producing and preparing food.

This year's theme is quite appropriate as traditional cooking was one of Fernandez's favorite subjects.

Writing about unsophisticated, rustic ("Slow Food," "Food Magazine), she said:

"When Nita, my cook, goes home to Iriga, Nueva Ecija, she always returns bearing a ration, five-range chicken which she had chosen live in the market, taken home in a net bag, and broiled lightly in salt at her sister's house. With it she brings the roasting chicken's delicacies—the tiny heart, liver and gizzard, packed from unwanted raw boundary.

"The resulting dish, unsophisticated, is spiked with ginger bits, is undercoat. It is not cringing or mutual, which is assured with boiled and mashed tamarind fruit. This is chicken...and no fowl, ground, bones and blood—tenderized and flavored with young tamarind sprouts, its tenderest at a gentle edge, in a dilemma uniquely pleasurable."